Religious Education and Political Activism in Mandate Palestine

Suzanne Schneider

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2014

ABSTRACT

Religious Education and Political Activism in Mandate Palestine

Suzanne Schneider

This dissertation offers a conceptual analysis of Jewish and Islamic religious education in Palestine during the years of British military, civil and Mandatory control (1917-1948). It examines the policies toward religious education pursued by the Government of Palestine, as well as practices developed by Jewish and Muslim educators for use within Zionist and private Arab schools. Based on a combination of archival sources, school curricula, textbooks, memoirs and newspapers, this dissertation elucidates the tensions that characterized attempts on the part of colonial and "native" reformers to transform the structure, content and purpose of religious education in pursuit of their respective political goals.

In order to situate the Department of Education's policies within Palestine's sectarian context, I chart how an understanding of religion as an apolitical source of individual ethics found reflection in a legal structure that tied educational freedom to the religious community. I further argue that the Department of Education promoted a novel version of religious education within both Jewish and Muslim communities as, somewhat paradoxically, a means of preserving the "traditional" order in which religious knowledge was separated from national politics. Therefore while secular studies were encouraged on an instrumental basis, administrators vigorously opposed the development of secularism as an ideological framework associated with moral discord and political upheaval.

The second half of this project discusses educational initiatives among Zionist and Palestinian Muslim leaders in order to highlight the points of overlap and rupture with policies pursued by the Mandatory state. Notwithstanding a strong impetus within both groups to vilify customary forms of communal schooling, neither acquiesced to the colonial view of religious education as the source of "universal" values that transcended the realm of mass politics. In contrast, Jewish and Muslim leaders in Palestine offered alternative educational models in which control over religious knowledge was innately linked to the goals of their respective political movements. Rather than viewing religious education as a source of social continuity, modernists placed the reform of religious education at the center of a program that aimed at revolutionary change.

Finally, by adapting a theoretical model borrowed from Bruno Latour, this project argues that the apparent differences between the Government of Palestine on one hand, and Jewish and Muslim educators on the other, were more discursive than material. Education functioned as a political tool within the schools maintained by each group; however, the link between pedagogy and politics was one that the Mandatory government refused to recognize. On the contrary, the Department of Education accused Jewish and Muslim leaders of transgressing the boundary meant to separate education as an exercise in character formation from education as a site of social conditioning and political mobilization. Battles over the content and purpose of religious education therefore constituted part of a larger conflict regarding the relationship between mass schooling and political engagement in modern Palestine.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Having spent the better part of my adult life at Columbia, leaving Morningside Heights is inevitably a bittersweet moment. I would like to extend my gratitude to both Columbia College and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, without whose support I could have never pursued this path. Along the way, I have received additional aid from the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies and the Middle East Institute, both at Columbia University, as well as the Palestinian American Research Center. These organizations have been instrumental in facilitating my research trips and conference travel, and I owe their respective staffs my heartfelt thanks.

Universities are only as good as the people that compose them, and here I have been particularly fortunate in learning from the best and the brightest. In the spring of 2003, I took a class on the history of Iran through the Safavid period. With no offense to the subject, the single most valuable thing I got out of the experience was Richard Bulliet as an advisor and mentor. For more than a decade, he has been at the heart of my intellectual development, pushing me to study Arabic, advising my undergraduate thesis, and finally serving as a committee member for this project. I have had the opportunity to pass many pleasant afternoons in his company discussing everything from wheeled vehicles to the particular stresses that accompany writing a dissertation in the company of newborn twins. His confidence in my abilities and interest in my pursuits have served as a constant source of strength.

Though no longer on this side of the Atlantic, Uri Cohen continues to be my intellectual sounding board, chief motivator and sharpest critic. Uri is not just a brilliant mind, but a dedicated teacher and devoted mentor who has been both unyielding in his expectations and patient as I chart my path toward them. To Rashid Khalidi, who was instrumental in developing this project, I am indeed indebted for his keen insights, encyclopedic knowledge of Palestinian history and continual support. Rashid's dedication to his students amidst the countless demands on his time has served as a model I hope to one day emulate.

It was to Columbia's collective fortune that Timothy Mitchell made the journey uptown in 2008. Since that time, I have benefited immensely from his patient guidance and brilliant critiques. Along with Gil Anidjar, whose theoretical direction has proved indispensible, I am thankful to all of these individuals for their help in developing this project.

The Department of Middle East, South African and Asian Studies has served as my academic home for eleven years, and to its faculty and administrative staff I extend my heartfelt gratitude. Taoufik ben-Amor patiently nurtured me through countless linguistic battles in order to facilitate the work I do today, and I am forever grateful for his kindness and genuine interest in his students' success. Also deserving of special thanks are Dan Miron, George Saliba, Hamid Dabashi, Muhsin al-Musawi and Sudipta Kaviraj, all of whom have shaped my intellectual development. To Jessica Rechtschaffer, who keeps the ship afloat, I cannot thank you enough for all you have done and continue to do in support of my endeavors.

I have been fortunate enough to both learn from my fellow graduate students and enjoy their friendship. To Elik Elhanan, Maheen Zaman, Valentine Edgar, Tyler Williams, Nathanael Shelley, Yitzhak Lewis, Seth Anziska, Erica Borghard, Yuval Kremnitzer and Roni Henig, I extend my thanks for your guidance and community. I am sure I will continue to learn from your insights.

There are still other individuals who have provided needed direction and constructive criticism about this project. Hilary Falb and Liora Halperin created a MESA panel on education in Mandate Palestine that force me to first consider religious education as a dissertation topic. In the years since, I have benefited from their collegiality and insights, and thank them for their assistance at many points along the way. Yotam Hotam has been a patient reader of many chapter drafts and a continual source of encouragement. Adam Zachary Newton and Miriam Udel have repeatedly assured me that I would, in fact, reach this day. And Laura Schor has served both as an intellectual companion and personal mentor over the last several years. Additionally, a number of individuals have aided in my research, and I would like to especially thank Ela Greenberg, Khader Salameh, Ellen Fleischmann, Qais Malhas and Amiel Shefer for their help.

This project has certainly been an intellectual journey, but it would never have reached fruition without the emotional and logistical support of my family and friends. Having twins in the midst of one's dissertation research generates unique challenges, and I assuredly would not be here without the love and assistance of so many. My parents have long exhibited selfless love for their children, and now, extend the same sense of unconditional devotion to their grandchildren. The

distance between South Dakota and New York has never deterred them from being here when we have needed them most. To my siblings, Joseph, Kara and Andrea, and their spouses, Joe and Ann, thank you for your years of love and patient support. You have each served as role models in your own ways.

To my wonderful in-laws, Lisa and Yaron Reich, thank you for your endless support in various forms. From babysitting to dropping off groceries and offering translation help, I could not have done it without you. My brothers and sisters-in-law have handled seven years of graduate school talk with gracious cheer. In particular, Yehuda and Arielle Reich have looked after me during my research trips to Israel. Leora and Aharon Bejell and their children, especially Chananel, Oriel, Shmuel and Yedidya, have gone out of their way to facilitate my research in Jerusalem. Last but certainly not least, to our grandparents, Drs. Leon and Rosalie Reich, who have spent countless hours with their great-grandchildren while I snuck away to work, I owe my deepest gratitude and affection.

Beyond merely offering words of support, my friends have been instrumental in helping me maintain my sanity. They have listened with patience and love, edited drafts, cooked dinner, fed babies and now, entertained toddlers. To Elizabeth Marcus, Daniel Lee, Rebecca Miller, Josh Levine, Jordan Salvit, Eliana and Lev Meirowitz-Nelson, Joanna Kabat, Steven Melzer, Tracy Massel, Jax Russo and Jason Canavan, my love and most genuine thanks. Gloria Rivera has loved our children like they were her own, and I could never have completed this project without the reassurance that her presence provided. And to the creators of *Dora the Explorer*

and *Thomas the Tank Engine*, thank you for enabling me to write this dissertation in twenty-three and ten minute increments, respectively.

Last but far from least, to Yonatan Reich, who has served as an editor, cheerleader, and unrelenting source of strength, I owe my most profound love and gratitude. It was a happy accident that you stumbled into my Arabic class ten years ago, and it is my great fortune that you are still by my side. Finally, to our not-so-little babies, Charlotte and Sophia, thank you for all the insanity and absolute splendor you bring to our world.

To my parents, Joel and Mary Sue Schneider,

who have given so much that I might arrive here today.

Introduction

Several years ago in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity to attend a *chumash mesibah*, a celebration during which five-year old boys in a Jewish ultra-Orthodox school, or *ḥeder,* received their individual copies of the Torah. The program was conducted in Yiddish with a tall barrier separating excited mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunts from the men up front. Plates with the presiding rabbi's *kugel* circulated through the audience. For all these traces of *Yiddishkeit*, it would be hard to characterize this as a traditional affair. To begin with, the rabbi was escorted into the event by a security detail wearing Bluetooth headsets. A stage had been erected whose level of set design would outshine many private school productions in the United States. The young boys performed—in costume—a fully choreographed song and dance routine before receiving their *chumashim*. Flat-screen televisions broadcast the performance throughout the audience, ensuring that even the women seated in the back could get a close up view of their budding Torah scholars in matching silver hats.

While Yiddish is not a language I speak, I was nonetheless able to deduce that this "traditional" ceremony within the most "traditional" of Jewish communities was a wholly modern affair, notwithstanding popular depictions of Israel's ultra-Orthodox (*ḥaredi*) communities as the living embodiment of medieval Jewry. Instead of somehow residing outside the experience of Modernity, this small anecdote illustrates the ways in which the "new" can facilitate—rather than replace—the "old". It is an observation to which I have continually returned in my attempt to make sense of my multi-faceted object of inquiry: the nature of Jewish

and Islamic religious education in Palestine during the period of British Mandatory rule, and the character of British policy toward religious education. It was precisely during this period, perhaps more so than during any other in the history of modern Palestine, that the nature of education underwent a seismic shift from a decentralized practice managed largely by religious communities into a formalized system of schooling centrally managed by state or quasi-state institutions.[1]

This project began as a comparison of Jewish and Islamic communal schooling—exemplified by the *ḥeder* and *kuttāb*—and the ways in which these institutions evolved as they found themselves at the receiving end of overlapping internal and colonial reform efforts. Generally speaking, reformers from both traditions began, beginning in the late eighteenth century, to identify these forms of schooling as the root of intellectual stagnation, moral corruption and even political decline. The logical conclusion was to transform customary forms of education as a key step in reinvigorating the national spirit and joining modern civilization as full members. I was interested in charting this transformation in Mandate Palestine, where Jewish and Muslim reformers crossed paths not only with one another, but also with a colonial regime wielding its own ideas regarding education.

[1] At the outset of the war, more than half of the Arab children who attended school were in private communal institutions: approximately 8705 in private Muslim schools (predominately *katātīb*) and thousands more in Christian (largely missionary) schools, versus 8248 in the Ottoman public schools. Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration* (London: Luzac, 1956), 20. Within the Jewish community, exact statistics of school enrollment by administrative body are unavailable, but it is unlikely that the number of students in schools managed by the *va'ad ha-ḥinuch* approached the number in private *ḥederim* and *talmudei-torah* given the difference in population between the Old Yishuv (66,000) and the New Yishuv (13,900) at the outbreak of the war. Rachel Elboim-Dror, *ha-ḥinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*, Sifriyah le-toldot ha-yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Erets-Yisrael (Jerusalem Yad Yitzhak Ben-Tsevi, 1986), Vol. 2. 21.

The work quickly grew into something much more expansive, largely on account of the dearth of scholarship that analyzed the critical role of religion in structuring Palestine's educational system as a whole. As it turns out, governing Palestine on sectarian lines generated a number of particular challenges and contradictions when it came to defining the content and purpose of religious education. Adding to the complexity, it quickly became evident that a project about religious education during this transitional moment could not take its subject for granted. The instability of religious education as an analytic category thereby gave rise to two considerations that have helped frame this investigation. The first points toward the novelty of "religious education" as a distinct conceptual object, a development that hinged on a redefinition of the function of formalized learning on one hand, and the emergence of the secular as a separate sphere of human experience on the other. As such, religious education is an entirely modern phenomenon within both Jewish and Islamic societies, though conventional wisdom may paint it as old as these traditions themselves. As I will argue in Chapter One, we must distinguish the transmission of sacred knowledge from the modern development of religious education as a form of individual and social transformation.

The second consideration stemmed from the difficulty in accounting for what qualified as "religious" in the educational programs I surveyed. Because the boundaries that distinguish the religious from the secular are porous, historically contingent and ever-shifting, it followed that a study of religious education in Palestine should not limit its analysis to the educational endeavors of the religious

Zionist (Mizrachi) party,[2] the Supreme Muslim Council,[3] or the Old Yishuv.[4] Yet for the most part, the existing scholarship looks at religious *schools* and does not account for the fact that religious education might take place outside of obviously religious spaces—such as in general Zionist schools or in those maintained by the Government of Palestine. My project thus attempts to move away from an institutional analysis focused on the usual suspects to a genealogical one that interrogates the criteria by which knowledge is labeled as "religious" in nature and the consequences, both material and hermeneutic, of this designation.[5]

With these considerations in mind, this project asks a series of historical and conceptual questions of archival records, school syllabi, textbooks, newspapers and personal narratives. How did religious education function within the ideological and administrative frameworks used to govern Palestine? What were the features of "modern" religious education as outlined by Jewish, Muslim and colonial educators, and in what ways did this education differ from customary forms? How did each party conceive of the proper relationship between religious education and nation-

---

[2] David Shemesh, *beit ha-midrash le-morim "Mizraḥi": masad la-ḥinuch ha-dati ha-leumi* (Jerusalem Misrad ha-ḥinuch veha-tarbut, Minhal ha-ḥinuch ha-dati - gaf hakhsharat morim : ha-Mikhlalah ha-datit le-morim `a.sh. R.A.M. Lifshits, 1991).

[3] Ela Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010). For a general overview of the Supreme Muslim Council's educational endeavors, see Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council : Islam under the British mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: New York, 1987), 139-44.

[4] Scholarship of this sort remains extremely limited. See Deborah Weissman, "ḥinuch banot datiyot bi-Yerushalayim bi-tekufat ha-shilton ha-Briti: hitmasdutan ve-hitgabshutan shel hamesh ideologyot ḥinuchiyot" (Thesis/dissertation (deg), Hebrew University, 1993). For the pre-Mandate period, and particularly details about the Old Yishuv's relations with the educational bodies of the Zionist Organization, see Elboim-Dror, *ha-ḥinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: Vol. 2.

[5] In his authoritative study of British educational policies in Palestine, Abdul Latif Tibawi offers a general overview of "religion, nationalism and education policy," but ultimately demurs. "Here it is not possible without disturbing the balance of emphasis in this study, to cover the whole field of the interaction of religion and education. This field is so wide and crowded with events to merit a special study." See Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: Chapter VII.

building projects? In short, what were the content, form and purpose of religious education as it developed into a discrete type of schooling in modern Palestine?

The central argument of this study is that there was a broad degree of overlap among Jewish, Muslim and British educators regarding the ineptitudes of customary forms of religious learning—symbolized most poignantly by Palestine's *ḥederim* and *katātīb* —however this accord crumbled when tasked with articulating the proper relationship between modern religious education and political activism. I argue that the Mandate government promoted a novel form of schooling within both Jewish and Muslim communities as, somewhat paradoxically, a means of preserving the "traditional" order in which religious knowledge was separated from national politics. This perception did not grow merely out of historical experiences in India and Egypt, but out of a distinctly Protestant notion of religion as a code of ethics that could be separated from politics, commerce and material life.

Against the British attempt to nurture religious education as an antidote to nationalist passions, Jewish and Muslim communities offered competing educational models in which religious knowledge was innately tied to Zionist and Arab political goals. Colonial officials who associated religious education with the "traditional" social status quo did not, by and large, detect the interpretive flexibility that gave this form of education revolutionary potential. Rather, as I suggest, the interconnected rise of mass politics and mass education produced opportunities to link religious identity to political action in a novel fashion. Based on a case study of al-Najah National School and the writings of its former headmaster, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, I argue that one way to articulate this relationship was to stress the

mutually constitutive nature of Islam and Arab identity, and moreover, to do so in a way that did not alienate Palestinian Christians. I argue that Zionist schools, for their part, displayed a marked tendency to blur the sacred and secular in an attempt to fashion a new form of Jewishness that challenged the modern definition of "religion" itself.

However, these respective responses were far from one-dimensional rejections of the colonial order. This study illustrates that Jewish and Muslim educators found points of agreement with the Mandatory government over the content of religious education, often so far as to privilege those elements of their traditions that seemed most compatible with the "universal" values championed by British officials. As such, educators from both communities came to articulate a view of religion that reflected central claims of secular modernity while, at the same time, rejected the colonial understanding of "religion" as a realm of experience distinct from national politics. This case study therefore proffers a nuanced account of the relationship between colonialism and "native" reform efforts that avoids treating the latter as either beacons of resistance or mere imitations of the colonial order.

Finally, I will suggest that, examined closely, battles regarding the politicization of religious education rested on a distinction that was more discursive than material. The fact that Jewish and Muslim educators articulated positions in which political power was inherently tied to "religious" identity should hardly be surprising if we survey Britain's own history. I argue that it was the invisibility of Britain's own political-theological tradition, reconstituted as secular universalism,

which generated a sense of difference between proper and improper uses of religious education.

In fact, distinguishing between "correct" and "corrupt" approaches to religious education constituted part of a larger colonial project. In trying to make sense of this matrix of boundaries and transgressions, I have borrowed a conceptual apparatus from Bruno Latour, namely, his idea of the modern constitution. In his work, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour outlines the quintessential principles that, he claims, constitute our modern disposition. His fundamental argument is that Modernity is distinguished from other periods by its attempt to erect an absolute barrier between nature (the natural realm of science, observable facts, physical forces) and society (the constructed sphere of culture, religion, politics). However, as he shows, attempts to differentiate these spheres—acts of purification in his terms—are coterminous with a "proliferation of hybrids," i.e. with acts, technologies and mental frames that transgress that very boundary. Modernity, in sum, is not distinguished by its *success* in separating the natural from the socially constructed, but by the *claim* that it does so. Thus "the modern world," Latour argues, "has never happened, in the sense that it has never functioned according to the rules of its official Constitution alone."[6]

The idea of absolute division and inevitable transgression is one that I have returned to in clarifying educational practices in Palestine. Importantly, this framework enables us to avoid both the language of intentionality and the anachronistic projection of our own sensibility upon the past. For instance, rather

[6] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 39.

than finding it *contradictory* that colonial administrators could possibly *overlook* the political dimension of educational practice (and ascribe their policies to pedagogic need, for instance), we should instead ask, "How was it possible for these ideas to exist harmoniously?" When posing the question in these terms, we can discern the outlines of what might be called the "modern educational constitution" wherein "correct" practices (represented below on the left side of the chart) are held apart from their corrupt forms (on the right). As true Moderns, British educators scrupulously upheld the distinction between "healthy" national pride and national chauvinism, civic engagement and mass politics, pedagogic necessity and social engineering, and religious values and political action:

Correct Practices	**Corrupt Practices**
National Pride	Nationalism
Public service	Mass politics
Religious-moral education	Religious-political education
Pedagogic Necessity	Social Engineering

In each instance, the "purification" of these categories marched hand in hand with the "proliferation of hybrids" that violated the boundary meant to preserve their separation. Following Latour, transgressions of this kind must be diligently denied, a fact that becomes most evident in (my concluding remarks about) Christian schools in Palestine. This brings us to the final point of contrast between the Mandatory government and Jewish and Muslim modernists: for the latter two, transgressions

across this boundary were not denied, but rather embraced as the key to revolutionary transformation.

Review of Existing Scholarship

It is noteworthy that in the overcrowded field of scholarship that branded as Palestine studies, relatively little has been written on education during the formative period of the British Mandate. Among the most important exceptions is Abdul Latif Tibawi's *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine*, a study of government public schools that remains the authoritative account of education under the Mandate despite being published nearly sixty years ago.[7] The study was based on Tibawi's own experience as an employee of the Government of Palestine's Department of Education and offers an account of the administration's policies that remains unparalleled.[8] That said, a work based on personal experience inevitably has its own limitations. The first such limitation is that Tibawi wrote almost exclusively about the Government system of Arab public schools that he knew best. He had far less to say about developments within Zionist, Christian or other private schools, and thus there's no sense of the synthetic forces that bound these different types of education together. The second, more serious, limitation is that he wrote

[7] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*. ———, "Religion and Educational Administration in Palestine of the British Mandate," *Die Welt des Islams* 3, no. 1 (1953). An important survey of educational institutions across the Middle East as they appeared in the late 1940s can be found in Roderic D. Matthews and Matta Akrawi, *Education in Arab countries of the Near East: Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1949).

[8] Perhaps the best indication of Tibawi's dominance in the field is that later scholars who have taken up the topic of education in Mandate Palestine have largely restated his central arguments. See Judith L. Wolf, "Selected aspects in the development of public education in Palestine 1920-1946" (Dissertation, Boston College, 1981). Nabil Badran, *Ta`lim wa-al-tahdith fi al-mujtama` al-`Arabi al-Filastini* (Bayrut: Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyah, Markaz al-Abhath, 1969).

about the subject prior to the declassification of vital documents related to educational policy, some of which were not released until the 1990s.

Writing is far more voluminous with regard to the Zionist school system, though much of this scholarship has only been published in Hebrew and it is mainly attentive to the internal struggles and developments of Jewish education in Palestine. The two most valuable accounts of this type include Yuval Deror and Shimon Reshef's *Hebrew Education during the days of the National Home, 1919-1948*, and Rachel Elboim-Dror's extensive study of the years immediately following World War One.[9] Limited attention is given in these studies to the Mandate government or its relationship with Zionist education; indeed, the Department of Education is usually considered in these accounts solely to criticize its supposed underfunding of Zionist schools. In addition, there is a remarkable tendency to treat Jewish education as a field that developed autonomously and in near isolation from either the colonial government or Palestinian Arabs. My study directly challenges this prevalent assumption and calls more generally for accounts of the *yishuv*'s history that do not reify the myth of Zionist self-sufficiency. Equally problematic from the perspective of this study is a proclivity (in this body of scholarship) to treat

[9] Yuval Deror and Shimon Reshef, *ha-ẖinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948* (Yerushalayim: Mosad Byalik, 1999). Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: Vol. 2. For the English reader, Joseph Bentwich (himself a former employee of the Department of Education under the Mandatory Government) wrote about Jewish education during both the Mandate and State periods. Joseph S. Bentwich, *Education in Israel* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965). Other works on education in English include Reuven Porat, *The history of the kibbutz: communal education, 1904-1929*, Kibbutz studies book series (Norwood, PA : Norwood Editions: Ramat Efal, Israel, 1985). Older studies, often published as government reports or Zionist polemics also exist. See *Hebrew education in Erez Israel*, (Jerusalem: Keren Hayesod, 1930); Noah Nardi, *Education in Palestine, 1920-1945* ([Washington] Zionist organization of America, 1945); *The system of education of the Jewish community in Palestine: Report of the commission of enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1945*, (London: H.M. Stationery Office 1946); ibid.

"religious" and "secular" as fixed categories whose content is self-evident rather than discourses still in the process of formation.

More recently, scholars have investigated select elements of education during this period in light of newly available archival materials and theoretical models.[10] My account is meant to strengthen these approaches by adding an important, though still missing, narrative: the place of religious education, theoretically, materially and politically amidst a flurry of colonial and nationalist efforts to transform traditional forms of schooling. It is my hope that using religious education as a category of analysis—albeit one whose boundaries were unstable—will allow my account to speak in a synthetic fashion across school systems that are usually studied in isolation. As I will argue, accounting for the connections between these schools is an essential part of understanding the financial, administrative, and even pedagogic codependency of educational systems that were, at first glance, totally separate.

Beyond the narrower scope of religious education, this work engages more broadly with scholarship from three different fields. The first is the political history of Mandate Palestine, and in particular, the sectarian policies pursued by the British administration.[11] Secondly, this project has learned much from, and hopes to further

[10] Liora Halperin's work on language pluralism within the *yishuv* and Ela Greenberg's study of Islamic education are both noteworthy contributions to the field. Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Hebrew and the Politics of Language in Palestine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine*. Also of note is Laura Schor's excellent study of the Evelina de Rothschild School for girls and its principal, Annie Landau. Laura Schor, *The Best School in Jerusalem: Annie Landau's School for Girls, 1900-1960* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press 2013).

[11] Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: the mandatory government and the Arab-Jewish conflict 1917-1929*, Royal Historical Society studies in history series (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978). More recent accounts have helped advance our understanding of the sectarian nature

contribute to, the body of Jewish studies scholarship on the *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment) and the Zionist movement.[12] That being said, there are two assumptions frequently found within this body of work that I hope to question. The first, which has colored our understanding of the *Haskalah*, is the celebration of the Jewish Enlightenment as the embrace of "universal" values, represented by a move from dogmatic parochialism to intellectual freedom, religious particularism to common humanism.[13] The second is an uncritical acceptance of Zionism as a predominately secular movement, with little theoretical engagement as to what is meant by "secular" and "religious" as descriptive labels or political models.

Finally, mindful of these complexities, this work also engages with the growing body of critical scholarship on secularism both as a unique historical phenomenon (as opposed to a universal model of Modernity) and epistemic frame

---

of British rule and the difficulties it generated. See, for example, Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*, 1st ed., Jamal and Rania Daniel series in contemporary history, politics, culture, and religion of the Levant. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). In this regard, Rashid Khalidi's treatment of "traditional" Islamic power structures also deserves mention. Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage : the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*, 1st ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

[12] Among the most important works for the purpose of this study are those related to the educational projects of the *Haskalah*. See, for example, Shmuel Feiner, "Programot ḥinuchiot v'idialim ḥevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḥinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825," *Zion* 60, no. 4 (1995). ———, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). David Assaf and Emmanuel Etkes' compilation of scholarly essays and primary sources regarding the *ḥeder* has proved immensely useful. David Assaf and Immanuel Etkes, ed. *ha-ḥeder: meḥkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot* (Tel Aviv: Institute for Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010). Scholarship on the Zionist movement, as both an ideological construct and material reality, is vast and ever expanding. Some of the most important contributions available in English includes Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press 1995); Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew : the creation of a Jewish national culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered roots : collective memory and the making of Israeli national tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Eric Stephen Zakim, *To build and be built: landscape, literature, and the construction of Zionist identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006); Gershon Shafir, *Land, labor, and the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 1882-1914*, Updated ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[13] See, for instance, Shmuel Feiner's description of the *maskilim*'s assault on the *talmid ḥacham* "in favor of a universal and secular ideal: the ethical individual." Feiner, "Programot ḥinuchiot v'idialim ḥevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḥinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825," 7.

with material consequences for colonial and post-colonial societies. Ever since Jose Casanova's important intervention, *Public Religions in the Modern World*,[14] which challenged social science models that linked secularization with modernization, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have questioned the universality of secular reason as well as its alleged purging of religion from the public space. Of particular note here are recent works by Jürgen Habermas,[15] Charles Taylor,[16] and Timothy Fitzgerald,[17] as well as the excellent compilations edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen.[18]

While the importance of this growing body of work should not be understated, the vast majority of it remains focused on Euro-American contexts. Yet, as a phenomenon with universal pretenses, secularism has historically traveled far outside this particular geography via the wings of imperialism. The history of secularism in the colonies is one that necessarily differs from the European or American experiences, and yet it remains the most under-explored. Talal Asad's unmasking of the secular as Christian in his analysis of law courts in colonial Egypt remains the most important work in this regard.[19] Following Asad, Gil Anidjar's writing about secularism in the thought of Edward Said has contributed significantly

---

[14] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
[15] Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society," *New Perspectives Quaterly* 25, no. 4 (2008); ———, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-secular Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010).
[16] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
[17] Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); ———, ed. *Religion and the secular: historical and colonial formations* (London: Equinox, 2007); ————, *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (London: Continuum 2011).
[18] Craig Calhoun, "Secularism, citizenship and the public sphere," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011); Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 2013).
[19] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

to our understanding of the links between Orientalism, secularism and "religion" as "an object of criticism that needed to be no less than transcended (italics original)."[20]

Despite this growing body of scholarship, historians of the Middle East have not, on the whole, taken the consequences of these interventions into serious consideration. How, for example, does our understanding of Arab political movements in the twentieth century shift if we take a critical stance toward the avowed secularism of many of its leaders? In what way were they secular? Which intellectual positions are assumed within (and concealed by) this claim? This project aims to offer a concrete historical case study of the ways in which colonial secularism affected the transformation of education in Mandate Palestine. It is my hope that this may constitute a modest example of how our historical understanding can be enriched through an engagement with debates stemming from social theory that challenge the very terms of our analysis.

Theorizing Separatism

Writing about education in Palestine has been colored by similar historiographical trends that characterize histories of Mandate period more broadly, that is to say, most accounts take for granted the separateness of Jewish and Arab societies. For scholars of the *yishuv,* the "dual society" model pioneered decades ago by Moshe Lissak and Dan Horowitz still exerts considerable influence over the study

[20] Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 33, no. 1 (2006): 62.

of Palestine during this formative period, and not without good reason.[21] However it is also evident that this model, which treats the *yishuv* as an autonomous society that existed in isolation from its surroundings, is one of Zionist historiography's most important myths. Scholars who have worked on Jewish education during this period have reified the image of Zionist self-sufficiency by largely neglecting the legitimate points of dependence and influence that linked education within the *yishuv* to practices pursued by the Government of Palestine, missionary bodies and Palestinian Arabs.[22]

At the other end of the historiographical spectrum, scholars of Palestine have endeavored to showcase the history of Palestinian Arab society as a multidimensional entity that existed prior to and independently of its conflict with Zionism.[23] There is much to say in favor of this method given that comparisons of Palestinian Arab society to the *yishuv* are fraught with methodological difficulties due to radical differences between the two populations in terms of literacy, educational level and occupation.[24] However, despite their merits, such studies nonetheless tend to reinforce the dual society narrative that, particularly when dealing with the Mandate period, obfuscates our understanding of the forces that bound Palestinian and Jewish communities together, however unhappily. Is there a compelling alterative to isolationist and comparative approaches?

---

[21] Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the mandate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
[22] It is noteworthy, for example, that in the leading study of Jewish education during the Mandate Period, only 13 pages is devoted to describing the relationship between Zionist education and the Government of Palestine. See Reshef, *ha-ẖinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*.
[23] See, for example, Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1995).
[24] Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*: Chp. 1.

Historians of modern Palestine have offered two counter-models, though it is still remarkable that the dominant trend within scholarship on the Mandate Period is to focus on either Jewish *or* Arab societies. One approach stresses the points of mixture and interchange within the realm of everyday life. Such is the effort Moshe Naor and Tammy Razi are currently undertaking, and while I am sympathetic to the political position from which it stems, I am also wary of it as a historical method given the myriad political, legal, linguistic and cultural divisions that existed. It should come as no surprise that the historian who sets out to uncover instances of cooperation, mutual exchange and friendship between Palestinian Arabs and Jews during the Mandate Period will find them, and this reality certainly should challenge the prevalent isolationist narrative.

More promising though is the sociological model pioneered by Gershon Shafir that looks at the formative (though often unstated) impact of Jewish-Arab relations on Israeli state and society. As Shafir points out, "those aspects of their society which Israelis pride themselves on being the most typically Israeli," including the hegemony of the labor movement and *kibbutz* farming, are in fact consequences of Zionism's early struggles with the Arab economy in Palestine.[25] In a similar vein, Zachary Lockman has argued the merits of a relational approach to the history of Mandate Palestine that posits that "the histories of Arabs and Jews in modern Palestine can only be grasped by studying the ways in which both these communities were to a significant extent constituted and shaped within a complex

[25] Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*.

matrix of economic, political, social and cultural interactions."[26] Though the difficulties embarking on this course of historical study— starting with a necessary command of both Hebrew and Arabic—cannot be understated, some of the most compelling studies of modern Palestine have adopted such a relational frame.[27]

This project adopts a similar approach in attempting to account for the transformation of Jewish and Islamic religious education during the Mandate period. As such, my research stresses the discursive, administrative and financial structures that caused Jewish and Arab education to develop relationally. While accounting for the distinctiveness of Arab and Jewish education, I attempt to show that treating these systems in isolation presumes certain social structures that were still in the process of formation. To again borrow from Bruno Latour, I have approached educational separatism as a "black box" whose development was contingent on the actions of various colonial and local agents.[28] In this respect, my project differs from the work of historians who have assumed that Jewish and Arab school systems merely continued to develop the way they had in the immediate Ottoman past, in which Palestine's population frequented schools in a largely sectarian fashion. In fact, I argue that the complete separation of Jewish and Arab school systems was, on

---

[26] Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 8.

[27] See, for example, Abigail Jacobson's study of late Ottoman Jerusalem, Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011). Also of note in this regard is Jonathan Gribetz's *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter*, which is forthcoming by Princeton University Press.

[28] In Latour's usage, a "black box" is an object or practice whose internal complexities and contingent nature of their development become concealed after it becomes widely accepted by the scientific community. Thus, for example, the steam engine is a black box, as we are no longer cognizant of the forces (i.e. the behavior of human actors, the availability of certain types of materials, laboratory accidents) that produced it or its internal workings; it rather appears to us to have been designed precisely the way we encounter it, and we can use it without understanding it. See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1988).

one hand, very much a product of political and pedagogic concerns pursued by the Mandatory government, and on the other, never fully realized.

A few concrete examples are useful in demonstrating these points of connectivity. For instance, initiatives within government public schools were often adopted with a view of equalizing Arab and Jewish education. Thus a public school building campaign that aimed to meet at least some of the demand for schooling among Palestinian Arabs—this at a time when over half of the annual applicants to schools were rejected based on lack of accommodation—would have to be offset by a proportional grant to Jewish Public System, even though this latter system was nearly universal in scope and generally benefited from better school buildings.[29] When the High Commissioner proposed to spend LP 40,000 to create a public trade school in Haifa, he acknowledged that in practice no Jews would attend it because the language of instruction was Arabic, and the Zionist movement already maintained a number or technical and vocational schools. He therefore offered to offset the establishment of the Arab school with a LP 20,000 grant to Jewish trade schools.[30] Zionist schools, conversely, were locked in constant competition regarding public funding with the Arab school sector, with the state's annual contribution determined proportionally, based on the number of school-age children in each community.

Rather than projecting separatism onto the past as the pre-existing reality, I have tried to examine *how* divisions were concretized (administratively, financially,

[29] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, Palestine Sub-Committee, Chapter VI. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 2, File 2.
[30] Sir Arthur Wauchope, "Trades School Address," June 25, 1934. TNA, CO 733/264/16.

legally), being mindful of the fact that not all forms of separation are created equal. Secondly, by examining the tensions inherent in the sectarian management of education in Palestine, I have tried to demonstrate the lasting significance of these policies—which set the stage (however unwittingly) for new articulations of the links between mass education, religious knowledge and political action—for thinking about political identity in the broader Middle East.

Secularism and Religious Modernism: A word on terminology

A note is here required about my use of secular/secularism and religious modernism as descriptive terms. As mentioned above, scholars in recent years have launched a sustained attack on the definition of secularism as a form of universal reason, purged of non-rational, superstitious or theological influences. A number of scholars have criticized Habermas' unstated assumption that secular reason is inherently rational and potentially universal, in contrast to the parochialism of religious reason. As Craig Calhoun has written, "Both religious orientations to the world and secular, 'Enlightenment' orientations depend on strong epistemic and moral commitments made at least partially pre-rationally."[31] As such, it becomes harder to theoretically sustain distinctions that juxtapose reasonable secularists with religious (read: irrational, fanatical) traditionalists, an observation with considerable importance for how we approach the history of the modern Middle East.

[31] Calhoun, "Secularism, citizenship and the public sphere," 83.

Perhaps then we should leave aside the value judgment attached to secular and religious outlooks, but preserve the definition of the secular as the desacralized or profane? There are certain advantages to this approach for our purposes, for instance, in describing school curricula in terms of their religious and secular components. At first glance, there seems to be little at stake in labeling mathematics a secular subject and the study of the Qur'an, for instance, a religious one. Yet, as I explore in Chapters Four and Five, the criteria by which we judge a type of knowledge "religious" or "secular" is far from clear and rarely uniform. Rather than representing neutral designations, the practical difficulties in defining the religious and the secular seems to echo Antonio Gramsci's question as to why we term "a unity of faith between a conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct" religion rather than ideology "or even frankly 'politics'."[32]

Adding to our challenge, secular is but one half of a pair, and the other term in this duo, "religion", is no less problematic. Timothy Fitzgerald has questioned the academic attempt to treat religion as a coherent object of study, arguing "religion cannot reasonably be taken to be a valid analytical category since it does not pick out any distinctive cross-cultural aspect of human life."[33] Beyond representing a poor category of analysis, religion also constitutes "one pole of the religious-secular dichotomy" whose epistemic dominance cannot be separated from the history of modern colonialism. To quote Fitzgerald at length:

> …the search for (or the invention of) religions in all societies by colonizing Europeans and Americans was proceeding hand in hand with the search for

[32] Antonio Gramsci, "On Hegemony " in *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, ed. Joseph Gerteis Craig Calhoun, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 237.
[33] Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*: 4.

> principles of natural rights, laws and markets. The discovery of religion as either the special repository of traditional values or alternatively a private realm of individual, non-political, otherworldly commitment made possible the construction of this-worldy individual freedoms, laws, and markets that were assumed to correspond to natural reason. One can see this process especially in relation to the changed meaning of the 'secular' from a division within a totality of Christendom combining all created beings in a cosmic hierarchy to a fundamentally distinct and neutral (factual) sphere of nature: natural individuals, freedoms, civil society, markets, and rationally defined in terms of natural science and contrasted with the supernatural, otherworldly sphere of private soteriological commitment. In reality the neutral, factual space, 'the secular'—the arena of scientific knowledge, modern politics, civil society, and Individuals maximizing natural self-interest—is itself an ideological construction, and it is the location of fundamental western values. But it is presented as a universal given to which all cultures (if they are fully rational) should conform.[34]

That secularism bears deep traces of "fundamental western values" masquerading as universal standards is an argument of significant importance for scholars of colonial and post-colonial societies, and few have showcased this better than Talal Asad in his study of legal reform in colonial Egypt. There he identifies the embrace by Muslim jurists of the idea of conscience as the site of individual self-governance as "something at once modern and Christian."[35] The restriction of *shari'a* court jurisdiction to laws of personal status thereby hinged on a novel sense of separation between external and internal, public and private, family and citizen, that developed during the British occupation of Egypt.

In short, "religion" and "secular" form a mutually constitutive modern couple whose members can only derive meaning through the negation of the other partner. Pre-modern thinkers in Jewish or Islamic contexts had no term for either concept. The modern usage of *dat* in Hebrew and *dīn* in Arabic to mean "religion" was, in both instances, a modification of a term whose original meaning is "judgment" or

[34] Ibid., 6.
[35] Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*: 245.

"law". In the Qur'an, *dīn* can also connote the path which one follows to live in accordance with the principles of *shari'a*. All of these usages are quite distinct from the modern idea of religion as a set of defined beliefs or symbolic gestures. Speaking about the "religious" aspects of Jewish or Islamic education means, by definition, that one is speaking about Modernity, and, more specifically, about how Christianity's pre-eminent Others came to assimilate a worldview that was decidedly foreign.

Having stated these theoretical considerations, we are still left with the problem of how to practically speak (and write) about institutions, practices and individuals in a way that does not reify the uncritical acceptance of terminology with limited analytical value. In my own usage, secularization is descriptive of the *attempt* to demarcate boundaries between distinct religious and secular spheres of human behavior, not the success in actually doing so. Religious and secular often appear in quotations in instances where I wish to highlight the difficulty of these designations for the immediate subject. There are other times when they are used in a more common way, though my preference has been, when not too clumsy, to use proper adjectives (Jewish or Islamic/Muslim) in lieu of "religious" to describe educators, schools and subject matter. As a whole, I have tried to reach some workable compromise between writing that is theoretically informed and that which is readily accessible.

Finally, a word is also required about a term that I use with some frequency, namely religious modernism and its derivative, religious modernists – though, in keeping with what was said above, I have tried to use proper adjectives (i.e. Jewish

or Muslim modernists) in these instances as well. I use the term to speak generally about the "enlightenment" or "renaissance" movements that occurred within Jewish (predominately European, though this was not always the case[36]) and Arab-Islamic societies as thinkers from both traditions tried to formulate responses—cultural, theological, linguistic, political—to the overwhelming power of European modernity and its secular order. In many, though not all, instances, the agents of religious modernism displayed a profound unease about the value of their respective "religions" (cultures? lives?) relative to the universalizing claims of Western—and specifically Christian—models. This was true not merely of education, but for institutional and intellectual practices ranging from ritual practice, modes of dress and structures of communal authority. Religious modernists were therefore linked by their negative sense of cultural inadequacy rather than by their positive proposals for addressing the "problem" of Jewish or Islamic societies.

The term religious modernism, consequently, should not be taken to connote a singular phenomenon; for instance, I consider *maskilim* (proponents of the Jewish enlightenment) who favored full Jewish participation in the European nation-state and Zionists who opposed to such efforts both religious modernists who—despite their significant differences—were joined in the apprehension that "traditional" Jewish society was ill-equipped to deal with the challenges and opportunities presented by modern times. Similarly, this category encompasses not only members

[36] Lital Levy has argued the case for a "global Haskalah" that is attentive to the contributions of non-Ashkenazi Jewries to the Jewish Enlightenment. See Lital Levy, "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History: The View from the East," *Prooftexts* 29, no. 2 (2009).

of the *'ulema* who advocated *shari'a* reform, but Arab nationalists who viewed Islam in civilizational rather than legal terms.

Yet, was it not the *differences* between these thinkers and the traditionalists ensconced in the institutional hierarchies of their respective religions that marked the former as "modern"? And did not many of the individuals in question self-identity as secularists, a designation that has been strengthened by historiographical representations of Arab nationalism and Zionism as fundamentally "secular" movements? While I will be the first to admit that all of these labels are fraught in their own ways, I have nevertheless used the terminology of religious modernism as an intervention of sorts against the uncritical acceptance of secularism as an actor's category. If taken in any of its commonplace meanings—as either the separation of supernatural religion from the naturalistic realms of science, law or politics or the freeing of secular reason from the constraints of religious discourse—no one described in this work was ever secular. These individuals were closer to secular in Talal Asad's very specific usage, meaning they embraced a reorientation of Islamic (and Jewish) juridical and ethical heritage that was fundamentally Christian. However, as I argue, the educational efforts of both Jewish and Islamic modernism display more complexity than is suggested by the paradigm of colonial mimicry.

In sum, religious modernism, while admittedly an imperfect term, has two advantages that recommend it: first, it challenges the tendency to treat religion as the prerogative of the usual suspects (old men with beards) and showcases novel approaches to texts and practices that, while undoubtedly new, were not necessarily

less Jewish or Islamic as a result; and second, it alludes to the negotiation of an identity that had, with the advent of colonial modernity, come to be seen as *religious* in nature. It is the ambiguities involved in defining the content of this category, and the purpose of religious knowledge, that sit at the center of the present inquiry.

Chapter Outline

In choosing religious education as a category of analysis I hope to be able to speak synthetically about the role of religion in structuring Palestine's education administration on one hand, and about the significance of debates regarding the definition and purpose of religious knowledge on the other. Because this is not an institutional analysis, I have chosen to organize chapters thematically rather than chronologically. I should underscore that my intent was not to write a comprehensive history of religious education in Mandate Palestine, but rather to explore those elements that were the most conceptually rich and which link discrete issues like pedagogy and school funding to broader questions of secularism, sectarianism and colonialism.

While the bulk of this study concerns the concrete interactions between Jewish, Muslim and British educators in Mandate Palestine, some historical context is required to situate these interactions within a longer continuum. Chapter One begins this task by charting the transformation of Jewish and Islamic education during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in response to both internal criticism and external threats. I distinguish between the transmission of sacred knowledge and modern systems of religious education to highlight the novelty of

the latter, which developed only with the invention of "religion" as a category distinct from everyday life. This development was coterminous with the extension of colonial or quasi-colonial power relations over both Arab Muslim and European Jewish communities wherein joining the consort of the "civilized" hinged in part on the emulation of European models of education and religious practice.

By revisiting two important documents in the history of Jewish and Islamic education reform, respectively written by the German *maskil* Naftali Herz Wessely and the Egyptian jurist, Muhammad 'Abduh, I chart the variety of strategies that modernists adopted in their quest to harmonize their traditions with a European commercial and moral order. This chapter highlights the emergence of a number of discursive tendencies—ranging from concerns over scriptural authenticity, disdain for mysticism and attempts to standardize religious instruction—that would continue to influence educational debates in early twentieth century Palestine. Furthermore, this chapter draws attention to the historical contingency of new, standardized forms of religious education on the state apparatus, and thereby invites consideration of the ways in which pedagogic practices are linked to the administrative practices and coercive power of the modern state.

Chapter Two pivots this discussion to focus on the particular time and place of Mandate Palestine. Here I provide an overview of British educational policies in Palestine, which in the eyes of seasoned colonial administrators, offered an opportunity to "get it right" following missteps in both India and Egypt. Generally speaking, the Mandatory government pursued a number of goals that practically undermined one another: the expansion of primary education at the expense of

secondary school (which were supposed to provide teachers for said primary schools), the design of village school curriculum on a "rural bias" and a preference for monolingualism (to keep the *fellah* on the land), and the belief that education policy should act to equalize the cultural and economic rifts that separated Jews from Arabs (which would have drastically changed the *fellah*'s status).

Most importantly, this chapter challenges the narrative of educational separatism that views distinct Jewish and Arab school systems under the Mandate as the natural extension of the Ottoman *millet* system in which minorities retained a great deal of autonomy in communal matters. Rather, I argue that a novel form of educational separatism came into being during this period as a result of distinct policies related to education financing, supervision and pedagogic practices. On the educational front, dual societies were *produced* during this period, and done so in a way that was hardly incidental.

The next crucial piece in this story, then, is to examine the type of divisions that Palestine's education administration nurtured, and the formative role of "religion" in structuring those divides. Based on an analysis of debates surrounding the Palestine Education Ordinance of 1933, Chapter Three argues that the Mandatory government created a category of exception for religious schools and those managed by "religious" communities. This administrative structure functioned to the advantage of schools managed by the Zionist Organization, and later, the Va'ad Leumi, which were given a large degree of autonomy based on their status as the educational system of Palestine's official Jewish community – a designation, which, as I explore in Chapter Five, generated no shortage of contradictions.

Conversely, linking educational autonomy to religious community weakened Palestinian attempts to create a *national* school system that united children from different confessional backgrounds.

Moving from the Education Ordinance to the worldview reflected therein, Chapter Four offers a close analysis of the foundational assumptions of British education policy: first, that education constituted an apolitical practice whose aim was character formation and whose procedures were dictated by pedagogic necessity; and second, that religious education functioned as the apolitical cornerstone of moral fashioning. Through an extended discussion of the curriculum used in the Arab Public System, I argue that government schools promoted a Protestant view of religion in which Islam, as an ontological category, was largely restricted to the text of the Qur'an and ritual instruction. Based on a closer reading of the unstable boundary between sacred and secular time, this section further demonstrates where the real danger lie in the eyes of colonial educators, not with the teaching of transcendent religion, but that of national history.

This chapter concludes with a comparison of the Arab Public System to al-Najah National School in Nablus, which, I argue, offers an instructive example of the ways in which Muslim modernists negotiated colonial secularism. Here I argue that al-Najah approached religious education in much the same way as the Government of Palestine. However, while they largely agreed on the *content* of Islam, they differed on its role within the Arab political project. These differing articulations of the relationship between Islam, education and national politics reveal much about British notions of "proper" nationalism and religious affiliation on one hand, and, on

the other, the ways in which Muslim modernists forged their own models in the colonial shadow.

Chapter Five continues this discussion by looking closely at the relationship between the Mandatory government and Zionist schools. I argue that divergent understandings of Jewishness stood at the center of tensions between the Department of Education and the Zionist Organization, which here manifest as disagreements regarding the nature of "religious" education. Here too, British administrators pinned their hopes on the ability of the religious content of education to restrain Zionism's "national chauvinism." Yet this position was rife with tension due to the very sectarian nature of Palestine; while Jews were officially recognized as a nation, Judaism was supposed to rise above the political fray.

Conversely, through a close reading of Zionist school curricula, I argue that the essential novelty in this educational program lies in its attempt to blur the boundaries between holy and profane and thereby challenge the modern concept of "religion" itself. Labeling this schooling secular—in either the sense of denoting a non-religious outlook or in adopting an epistemic model that is essentially Christian—only functions to obscure what was radical about a mode of social conditioning that was, and continues to be, the source of Zionism's strength.

In closing, I suggest that, despite all the energy that was poured into attempts to divide education into sacred and secular components, here too the "modern constitution" could not be actualized. Rather, it seems that religious education can accommodate an endless variety of messages; perhaps the only thing it cannot do is stand outside of politics. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find religious

education complicit in the most rabid racism and most radical peace efforts in contemporary Israel, for example. Nor should we assume that religious education is the problem while secular education is necessarily linked to humanism or political freedom – as is often the case when commentators speak about education reform in Muslim countries. I have argued that the era of public education and mass politics gave rise to a new type of relationship between Jewish and Islamic discursive traditions and political activism – a reorientation that, not incidentally, occurred under the auspices of colonial modernity. The very interpretive flexibility that has allowed both Muhammad ‘Abduh and Osama bin Laden to claim the mantel of “true” Islam, for instance, points to the instability inherent in this process. How adherents to both traditions choose to articulate this relationship in the future is anyone’s guess.

Chapter One

Educational Secularization and the Colonial Project

> The secular is itself a sphere of transcendental values, but the invention of religion as the locus of the transcendent serves to disguise this and strengthen the illusion that the secular is simply the real world seen aright in its self-evident factuality.[1]
>
> Most importantly, moveover, secularism is a name Christianity gave itself when it invented religion, when it named its other or others as religions.[2]

While this project is chiefly concerned with the history of religious education in Mandate Palestine, we must appreciate the extent to which Jewish and Muslim communities there were heirs to debates and processes that began several decades earlier in places like Berlin, Cairo and Beirut. It was no mere accident that education reform became a key tenet of the modernist platform propagated first by European *maskilim* in the late eighteenth century, and, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, by Muslim reformers spread from India to North Africa.[3] While the establishment of new public schools has often been linked with the development of

---

[1] Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*: 73.

[2] Anidjar, "Secularism," 62.

[3] The more comprehensive overview of these trends within the Arab context is Albert Hourani's work, Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Other accounts, such as Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: a Study in Cultural Encounters* and George Antonius's classic, *The Arab Awakening*, remain informative even if their theoretical frameworks are no longer as compelling. See Ibrahim A. Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe : A Study in Cultural Encounters*, Oriental studies series (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963); George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: the Story of the Arab National Movement* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1939). Similar dynamics were at work in contemporary Islamic reform efforts in South Asia. Sayyid Ahmed Khan, for instance, was well known for his attempts to develop the empirical sciences in India. "Today we need, as in former days, a modern *'ilm al-kalam* by which we either render futile the tenets of modern sciences or [show them to be] doubtful, or bring them into harmony with the doctrines of Islam." See: Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan on Islam and Science," in *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, ed. Andrew Ruppin and Jan Knappert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 177. Scholarship devoted to the *Haskalah* and Zionism is too numerous to enumerate. Among the more useful texts regarding each movement's education programs, see Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin, ed. *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 2001). Etkes, *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*; Feiner, "Programot ḫinuchiot v'idialim ḫevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḫinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825."; Elboim-Dror, *ha-ḫinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*.

nationalism in European states,[4] Jewish and Muslim modernists confronted a slightly different educational context. Because reformers from both camps were confronted with long traditions of lay education, their efforts were often directed at the transformation of existing systems of communal education—which were increasingly viewed as the source of moral corruption and cultural decay—rather than the *ab initio* creation of secular schools.

In general terms, modern Jewish and Islamic reform movements sprang from a sense of the inadequacy of the existing religious and social order to meet the challenges of the modern world—the latter being represented by the cultural, economic and political might of Western Europe. Certain common features characterized the reformist agenda, at least within Jewish and Arab-Islamic contexts: a heightened emphasis on a pure language (Arabic or Hebrew) as a vessel of national heritage; a tendency to minimize exegetical traditions in favor of an unmediated approach to the sacred text; a desire to diversify the curricula studied within communal schools to include European languages and modern sciences; and an insistence on schools' hygienic and pedagogic improvement.

Despite their notable differences, both Jewish and Islamic modernist movements singled out education as the key driver of social transformation and tied the attainment of a vast array of goals to the adoption of modern forms of schooling being pioneered in European contexts. Understanding the later history of religious education in Palestine requires taking stock of this modernist legacy, and crucially,

[4] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

the power disparities under which Jewish and Muslim intellectuals toiled. That is to say, these reformist platforms emerged against the backdrop of European domination – not merely in commercial or territorial terms, but in epistemic ones as well. We shall see that joining the club of the civilized—either as full citizens or international peers—imposed no shortage of demands on the petitioners in question. In short, the modernization of Jewish and Islamic education occurred within the context of European colonialism, which should not be taken to imply that these movements were somehow less "authentic" because of this fact. There is no historical period devoid of its power imbalances. This is merely to say that we cannot approach the transformation of educational practices *as if* they were the mere products of internal disquiet. Rather, respect for historical nuance requires accounting for the multi-dimensional contexts in which these transformations occurred.

Addressing Islamic modernism within the context of European colonialism is a well-established historiographical trend. It is not the case, however, for the study of Jewish communities, and a word is needed here as to why I favor this interpretive framework. Scholars of the Middle East and particularly of Palestine may chafe at the suggestion that European Jews—long associated with the Zionist conqueror—were in some way also colonial subjects. However counterintuitive in light of our contemporary political moment, I would nevertheless like to suggest that many aspects of Jewish modernism can only be grasped by appreciating the quasi-colonial

position of European Jews as the internal Other.[5] This historical experience formed the necessary (but not sufficient) foundation for Zionism's emergence in the late nineteenth century, and as I argue, the legacy against which Zionist educators in Palestine would react in their attempt to forge new connections between Jewish identity, communal education and mass politics. That Zionism chose colonialism as its mode of anti-colonial resistance—offering "a redemptive nationalist narrative vis-à-vis Europe and anti-Semitism and a colonialist narrative vis-à-vis the Arab people who 'happened' to reside in the place designated the Jewish homeland"[6]—makes this case both endlessly contentious and historically rich.

Conversely, within Jewish Studies, there has been an under-utilization of post-colonial theory as a tool for approaching the Jewish past.[7] This is no doubt a byproduct of broader cultural discourses through which Jews attempt to establish their proper place as children of the "West". Within such a context, the history of European Jewry's "enlightenment" is often a celebratory tale of joining European

[5] In his treatment of "the Jewish question" in conjunction with Muslim identity in the Indian subcontinent, Aamir Mufti has offered an exceptional example of the ways in which thinking about these "Others" in tandem can produce new insights. Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony* (Princeton Princeton University Press 2007).

[6] Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, Next wave (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 369.

[7] For a review of the strange place of Jewish Studies within the Academy, see Michael Galchinsky David Biale, and Susannah Heschel *Insider/outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (University of California Press, 1998). Important exceptions to the celebratory trend exist, for example Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: the Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, Contraversions 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Derek Penslar has noted the striking parallels that link Jewish modernism in Europe to anti-colonial and post-colonial movements in India and elsewhere. See Derek Penslar, "Zionism, Colonialism, Post-Colonialism," in *Israeli Historical Revisionism: From Left to Right*, ed. Anita Penslar Derek Jonathan Shapira (Frank Cass, 2003). For an extended discussion of the peculiar position of Jewish studies vis-à-vis post-colonial theory, see Derek J. Penslar and Ivan Davidson Kalmar, ed. *Orientalism and the Jews* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), Introduction.

civilization.[8] Within the work on Jewish education reform, there seems to be little question in much of the existing scholarship that the new "universal" ideas adopted by *maskilim* were actually so. Historians, however, should do more than uncritically reproduce categories such as "universal" and "particular" and rather question the contents and boundaries of these categories, ask who produced them, and investigate the processes through which they gained their epistemic power.

As a final introductory comment, it is necessary to establish the relevance of educational debates that took place in Berlin or Cairo by noting that Palestine was not self-sufficient in generating its own intellectual discourses. It was above all a site of circulation characterized by porous borders and the migration of people and ideas. Leaving aside the obvious fact that the political boundaries separating Palestine from neighboring Arab territories are themselves early twentieth century inventions, residents of Palestine had ample exposure to the flurry of writing about religious, political and social reform that originated in other Arab cities. It was customary for notable Muslim families to send their children to learn at al-Azhar in Cairo, and Palestine was of course a continuous site of pilgrimage for religious scholars. During the period of the British Mandate, and due to the absence of an Arab university in Palestine, students seeking higher education were most likely to do so in Cairo or Beirut.[9]

---

[8] Amnon Rav-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrachi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2005).

[9] "In 1931 there were 284 Palestinian students at Beirut and 30 at Cairo," wrote the educator Khalil Totah in a special edition on Palestine published by the American Academy of Political and Social Science. See Khalil Totah, "Education in Palestine," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 164, Palestine: A Decade of Development (Nov. 1932): 161.

The emergence of Zionism in the late nineteenth century marked an extreme version of the migration of individuals and knowledge that were common phenomena in this land of pilgrimage. While communal schools, the *ḥeder* (plural: *ḥederim*) and *talmud torah*, were commonplace in the urban centers of the Old Yishuv (and indeed, were still the dominant form of Jewish education in much of Europe), modern educational models found a foothold in the late nineteenth century in both cities and new agricultural settlements. Jewish and Muslim educators were also well acquainted with the myriad missionary schools that operated in Palestine and that tried to lure children into the faith through the prospect of food, shelter and a free education. While broadly perceived as communal threats, these schools nonetheless offered a model of modern education that was largely adopted by Jewish and Muslim communities as they founded new schools to compete with missionary establishments.[10] In sum, there are compelling reasons to situate the educational history of Palestine within the broader intellectual frameworks that rendered possible certain types of education—"religious" and otherwise—while closing the door on others. Doing so demands an appreciation of debates that were unfolding outside Palestine, but whose later influence can hardly be overstated.

[10] There is still much work to be done on the schools created by missionaries in 19th century Palestine. A few recent works gesture at the contentious—and competitive—relations between missionaries and local communities, for example, Charlotte van der Leest, "Conversion and conflict in Palestine: the missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant bishop Samuel Gobat" (Leiden University, 2008). For a broader geographic treatment, see Heather Sharkey and Mehmet Ali Dogan, ed. *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011); Samir Khalaf, *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant: Ungodly Puritans, 1820-1860*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History (Oxford, New York: Routledge, 2012).

The Case for Rupture

In his 1965 book, *Education in Israel*, Joseph Bentwich, a former Assistant Director of Education for the Mandate Government, offered a conventional view of Jewish education through the ages: the medieval *ḥeder* gave way to modern schools founded by European *maskilim,* which in turn yielded to the Zionist school system created in early twentieth century Palestine.[11] Extending the historical arc back in time, Bentwich explained that Jewish education for boys already existed on a widespread, if not universal, level by the 4th century CE, and presented the following passage from the Babylonian Talmud as evidence: "Formerly he who had a father was taught by him the Torah, but he who had no father did not learn it…until Joshua ben Gamala came and ordained that teachers should be set up in every province and every city, and that pupils should be admitted at the age of six or seven."[12]

A parallel account of the history of Islamic education by Abdul Latif Tibawi—who was, incidentally, one of Bentwich's colleagues in the Department of Education during the Mandate period—appeared in 1972.[13] Though in many ways a thoughtful and nuanced account, the text nonetheless presents a similar evolutionary trajectory that links the medieval *madrasa* of al-Ghazali's time to the educational reforms of Muhammad 'Ali and the eventual founding of national school systems in post-colonial Arab states.

I do not intend to devalue these two accounts or to diminish their contributions, but rather to question the continuity that each presumes between

[11] Bentwich, *Education in Israel*.
[12] Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 21a.
[13] Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac, 1972).

classical, medieval and modern forms of schooling. Certain features, such as the texts studied, seem to support the argument that contemporary Jewish and Islamic schools are the natural progeny of those that preceded them. And yet, these narratives seem to take for granted what are, in my interpretation, radical differences in terms of the purpose, structure and content of education that render the modern religious school something very different from the medieval *ḥeder* or *kuttāb.* As an alternative approach, I suggest we must start by distinguishing learning as a means of transmitting sacred knowledge from education as a mode of social disciplining, communal reform or individual transformation. As Jonathan Berkey has argued in his study of the *madrasa,* education in the pre-modern world was conceived of as "a pillar of *stability* rather than as a force for *change*" (original emphasis).[14] Thus while institutionalized learning had a long history in both Jewish and Islamic contexts, it is doubtful whether what occurred in these places was "education" in the modern sense of the term.

At the conceptual level, these changes corresponded with—and indeed, were dependent on—the universalization of the Protestant definition of religion as a private, individualistic and faith-based enterprise.[15] Correspondingly, it is a

[14] Jonathan P. Berkey, "Madrasas Medieval and Modern: Politics, Education, and the Problem of Muslim Identity," in *Schooling Islam: the Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* ed. Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 46.

[15] Numerous works on the invention of the category of religion as a distinct space of human experience have been published in recent years. Of special importance is the work of Talal Asad, who has traced the origins of secularism in early modern Europe and its migration to Egypt under colonial auspices. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); ———, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*; ibid. For a broader examination of religious and secular as categories linked to colonial politics, see Fitzgerald, *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*. Jewish studies scholars are beginning to appreciate the relevance of post-colonial criticism to the history of modern Jewish life in Europe and beyond. For example, Leora Batnitzky charts the invention of "Judaism" by *maskilim* and the scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* against the backdrop of Jewish

somewhat anachronistic to speak of religious education in Jewish and Islamic communities prior to the invention of "the religious" as a distinct component of social experience. It is therefore of no surprise to find that schools featuring religious instruction as discrete part of a broader curriculum did not emerge until the late 18th century in European Jewish communities, and the mid-nineteenth century among Muslim communities in Arab lands.

In his study of colonial Egypt, Timothy Mitchell has argued that, "Education, as an isolated process in which children acquire a set of instructions and self-discipline, was born in Egypt in the nineteenth century. Before that, there was no distinct location or institution where such a process was carried on, no body of adults for whom it was a profession, and no word for it in the language."[16] Mitchell highlights that education in this modern sense (*tarbiyya*, which as he notes, only acquired its contemporary meaning in the late nineteenth century)[17] must be differentiated from learning, which "occurred within the practice of the particular profession." [18] Like its Arabic counterpart, the Hebrew term *ḥinuch* (education) is of modern vintage. By contrast, one "learns" Torah (from *lilmod*), and even in contemporary usage the act of studying sacred texts is referring to as "learning." Thus, in approaching the history of religious education as a category, we must first appreciate the extent to which it represented a modern innovation despite certain points of continuity with pre-modern practices.

---

emancipation and the rise of the European nation state. Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[16] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 85.
[17] Ibid., 88-89.
[18] Ibid., 85.

A further point of Mitchell's analysis is helpful for situating contemporary debates regarding the newly emergent "secular" knowledge and the struggle over its presence or absence in schools. In his interpretation, religious education—particularly as it occurred at the higher levels—was akin to an apprenticeship process through which a tradesman learned his craft. Acquiring knowledge of the texts, modes of argumentation and commentaries encompassed by *shari'a* constituted the training process through which individuals became qualified to act as religious functionaries. While this interpretation points to a fundamental attribute of pre-modern learning—namely that knowledge and skills were acquired "on the job" rather than within distinct institutional settings—there are two qualifications we must consider. First, this explanation does not account for the prevalence of religious learning at the rudimentary level. Most children who attended a *kuttāb* would never become clerics or judges, yet the basic instruction they received—the only formal one they would receive, in most cases—was still centered around the acquisition of "religious" knowledge. That is to say, that such knowledge was regarded as substantively different than, for example, that required to perform a trade.

Secondly, religious knowledge was in the privileged position of being taught in quasi-institutional settings such as the *kuttāb* and *madrasa*. While such instruction was arguably not truly "education" in the modern sense of the term, we might also posit that the *only* education that existed was an extension of the sacred realm. It was not merely that learning had a religious component, but rather that schools were created and maintained to perpetuate knowledge of the words,

behaviors and texts that structured daily life (which we anachronistically call "religion"). Other forms of knowledge were in circulation, but the goals of education were loftier than occupational training. Had the *kuttāb* offered something else, it would no longer have been providing a genuine education.

In what follows, I will make the case for approaching Jewish and Islamic religious education as modern phenomena that must be differentiated from older forms of textual study. Though a close reading of two formative documents in the history of Jewish and Islamic education, I will show that the modernization of communal schooling depended on new educational models that embraced "universal" values, disparaged popular and local forms of piety and sought alliances with the state to advance the "proper" type of religious thought. That such actions—today associated with ultra-conservative forces within Jewish and Muslim communities—were undertaken by the modernist vanguard should not be overlooked.

An imperative to know

In the Jewish context, the catalyst for education can be traced to the biblical commandment for a father to instruct his children in the laws of Israel. The modern Hebrew term for education, *ḥinuch,* does not carry the same meaning in the Hebrew Bible, wherein *l'ḥanech* (the verb from which *ḥinuch* is derived) means "to dedicate" or "to initiate." The word shares the same root as *ḥ'nicah*, initiation, suggesting it was through *ḥinuch* that the child assumed his full role in the community. If one remembers that learning to publicly read the Torah was a necessary stage of

preparation for the *bar mitzvah* (literally, one who has reached the age of obligation for religious commandments, i.e. adulthood), the notion of *ẖinuch* as a form of initiation is indeed compelling.

The system of learning that Jewish modernists would later denounce—with the *ẖeder* and *talmud torah* at its base and the *yeshiva* at its apex—was already well established by the medieval period.[19] The *ẖeder* (literally "room") was a private school, run by an individual teacher to whom parents paid a fee. Children traditionally began at age three by studying the alphabet, and quickly moved onto the Torah, the Mishnah (the basis of the oral law) and the practical *halachot* (religious laws) that they would need to function in the community in which they lived. The *talmud torah* was identical to the *ẖeder* in terms of subject matter, but was maintained by the community at large to serve children whose parents could not afford the fees associated with the latter.[20] Only the most gifted students continued their studies beyond the elementary stage in the *yeshiva*, where learning and debating the legal minutia contained in the Talmud consumed the bulk of their energy.

In the Islamic context, one can point to numerous hadiths that implore the believer to educate him or herself. Famously included among the sayings of Muhammad are "The quest for learning is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female," "Wisdom is the goal of the believer and he must seek it irrespective of its source," and, "Seek knowledge even if it be in China." The *maktab*

[19] Chavah Turniansky, "Heder learning in the early modern period (limud ba'ẖeder b'et ha-ẖadasha ha-mukdemet)," in *ha-ẖeder: meẖkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*, ed. David Assaf and Immaneul Etkes (Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University 2010).
[20] Bentwich, *Education in Israel*: 6-7.

or *kuttāb* (plural: *katātīb*) were sites in which the child learned to read, recite and write the Qur'an, the terms *maktab* and *kuttāb* being related to Arabic verb "to write" or "to inscribe." Conducted by a local sheikh or imam, basic arithmetic was sometimes part of the curriculum as well.

Until the early modern period, learning in most Jewish and Islamic communities focused around acquiring literacy through the study of sacred texts, coupled with a practical understanding of the codes of conduct that ensured moral behavior in this world and happiness in the world to come. In its idealized form, education of this type was an inquiry into the sublime, and practically, it served as a process of socialization into the community in which the child lived. For example, no business partnership or marriage would be arranged without the parties reciting *al-fātiḥah,* the opening *sūra* of the Qur'an. Similarly, it is hard to classify familiarity with the laws of *kashrut* or Sabbath observance as merely intellectual exercises—or worse yet, "religious" duties—within the corporate structure of the medieval Jewish community.

The fact that these schools were useful to the communities they served was often overlooked in the modern period as Jewish and Muslim reformers echoed colonial administrators distain for "literary" knowledge and advocated an expansion of the traditional curriculum to include "practical" subjects. While the absence of secular subjects in schools remains something of an ideological position among certain contemporary circles, it is likely that the narrow curriculum in pre-modern Jewish and Islamic schools had less to do with an innate opposition to "practical"

subjects than with a unique understanding of what education as a practice actually entailed.

As referenced above, medieval Islamic philosophers such as al-Namari, al-Zarnuji and most importantly, al-Ghazali, articulated the classical expression of education as a form of ethics that was "essential for the formation of virtuous subjects and the maintenance of a common good."[21] This did not necessarily entail opposition to other forms of knowledge per se, but an attempt to preserve formal education as a system for developing the moral conduct that governed the individual's relationship with his fellow man and the piety that assured his devotion to God. As often occurred, the gifted student was able to study history, geography, or the empirical sciences in non-institutional settings; the average child would surely acquire much "practical" knowledge through apprenticeships or work with family members in agriculture, trade or commerce. Formal education, however, was to be reserved for something more dignified than learning a vocation.[22]

---

[21] Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, ed. *Schooling Islam: the Culture and Politics of Modern Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Introduction, 5. Numerous works exist on Islamic education in the classical period, some of which are valuable not merely as secondary sources but as examples of the way in which Arab modernists approached their heritage. See for example, Khalil Totah, "The Contribution of the Arabs to Education" (Columbia University, 1926), Chp. VII. For a more recent and comprehensive history, see Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*. Two contemporary essay collections have recently appeared, both of which critique certain elements of the modernist paradigm in addition to dispelling popular depictions of Islamic schools as incubators of religious fundamentalism. See: Zaman, *Schooling Islam: the Culture and Politics of Modern Education*. Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh, ed. *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[22] According to one historian of Ottoman education reform, "It did not belong to the ultimate educational goal of the traditional Islamic school system to transmit utilitarian-practical knowledge." We must question the extent to which religious knowledge was not useful or practical to the societies in which it served, but the point here is rather that the knowledge required for one's trade or vocation was not part of the traditional school. Selcuk Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*, The Ottoman Empire and its heritage,; v. 22. (Leiden: Boston, 2001), 19.

For their part, Jewish thinkers held that education was not only a form of socialization required to ensure the continuity of tradition (*mesorah*, literally meaning that which is passed down or handed over), but represented an act of worship itself. The act of "learning Torah" (*talmud torah*)—which encompassed not just the five books of Moses, but the whole of the Hebrew Bible, the Mishnah and Talmud (in which the "oral law" was recorded and expanded upon), as well as later commentaries—constitutes a central religious commandment, and significantly, one that is regarded as encompassing all others. As the Talmud famously states, "These are the things for which man eats the fruit of them in this world but their bounty is fulfilled in the world to come: honoring one's father and mother, acts of kindness and bringing peace between men. Learning Torah is the equivalent to all of them."[23] Again, the reverence for education as a practice of transmitting sacred knowledge was not necessarily accompanied by the eschewing of practical skills within pre-modern Jewish communities. Such knowledge was learned through private tutors, during apprenticeships or within the scope of family businesses. The emergence of a large ultra-Orthodox bloc in Israel that fiercely opposes the inclusion of secular subjects within school curricula partially obscures this fact, and yet, one need only scratch the surface to uncover the modern providence of this "traditional" revolt.

Musty Rooms and Medieval Masters

If education was to become the germ of social transformation, as Jewish and Muslim modernists argued it should, it hinged on discrediting existing modes of

[23] Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat, 127a.

religious learning as backward and socially debilitating. Literature was the preferred vehicle for advancing such critiques, and depictions of the *ḥeder, talmud torah* and *kuttāb* assumed a remarkably similar form in reformist writings: the schoolroom is dark, musty and dirty, lacking in the necessary furnishings; the teacher is foolish and abusive; rote memorization is promoted over real understanding, the texts studied are inappropriate for young children; the language is corrupted, either by the Yiddish of the teacher (*melamed*) or the vulgarities of colloquial Arabic.

The portrayal of the *ḥeder* as a "schoolroom of hell" was a recurring trope in *Haskalah* literature aimed at discrediting the old social order, so much so that any positive aspect of this education was forcibly repressed in furtherance of the *maskilim*'s ideological agenda.[24] The paradigmatic condemnation of the *ḥeder* came in Shelomo Maimon's autobiography, in which, "the defective approach to teaching, deriving from the ignorance of the teacher, prevented the student from attaining systematic knowledge of either the Hebrew language or the Bible."[25] In other words, the deficiencies of the *ḥeder* were responsible for depriving the child of an intimate connection to his "authentic" Jewish heritage. In addition to its pedagogic deficiencies, the *ḥeder* was depicted as a place of physical violence directed against young children by the teacher and his assistant. In Avraham Bar Gottlober's memoirs, for instance, the *ozer* (assistant) is so abusive that children perish from his

[24] For a review of literary and autobiographical depictions of the *ḥeder*, see Avner Holtzman, "ben hoka'ah l'hitrafkut: ha-ḥeder b'sifrut ha-zichronot u'v'sifrut ha-ivrit," in *ha-ḥeder*, ed. David Assaf and Immanuel Etkes (Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010).
[25] Ibid., 78-79.

beatings.[26] Similarly, In Yehuda Lieb Levine's autobiography, a stick-wielding *melamed* kills the writer's brother at the tender age of six. Even more astoundingly, the author recounts how he himself is nonetheless sent to the same *ḥeder* with the same savage teacher, until his father relents and agrees to hire private tutors instead.[27] Within this literature, the abuses of the teacher are mirrored by the filthy conditions of the school, which is almost without exception portrayed as dark, dirty and lacking space—both physical and pedagogical—for children to play.

Yet, as Avraham Holtzman has shown, the *ḥeder* was not without possible redemption. Rather, for Zionist writers, it could serve as a vehicle for the preservation and further development of the Hebrew language and culture – but only on the condition that it be drastically reformed. The clearest articulation of this latent potential appears in Hayyim Nahman Bialik's short story, "*Safiaḥ*" (Aftergrowth), in which the protagonist attends two different *ḥederim.* The first is characterized by the usual darkness, Yiddishkite and physical filth, while the second offers a manifestation of what the *ḥeder* could be: still seeped in classical Jewish texts, but now conducted in Hebrew, often outdoors, and absorbed in tales of Biblical heroism rather than with the ritual laws stemming from Leviticus.[28]

Likewise, critiques of the *kuttāb* appeared frequently in the writings of Arab intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was not

---

[26] Avraham Bar Gottlober, *Zichronot me yamei ne'uri*, ed. Ruven Goldberg (Jerusalem1976). Originally published as a serial in the Hebrew Journal *Boker Ore* between 1879-1886.
[27] Yehuda Lieb Levine, "Zichron ba'sefer - Rishumim m'toldodti v'koroti (1910)," in *Zichronot v'higayonot*, ed. Yehuda Slotzky (Jerusalem: 1968). Holtzman, "ben hoka'ah l'hitrafkut: ha-ḥeder b'sifrut ha-zichronot u'v'sifrut ha-ivrit," 81-82.
[28] Hayyim Nahman Bialik, "Aftergrowth (Safiah)," in *Aftergrowth and Other Stories* (Philadelphia The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1939). For an expanded analysis of the story, see Holtzman, "ben hoka'ah l'hitrafkut: ha-ḥeder b'sifrut ha-zichronot u'v'sifrut ha-ivrit," 108-10.

necessarily a modernist trope, as the Arabic language has no shortage of proverbs dedicated to the supposed foolishness of the *kuttāb* teacher—"stupider than a *kuttāb* teacher" being a frequent insult. Such claims were already being countered in the ninth century C.E. when the famed writer al-Jahith defended the lowly *kuttāb* teachers, who "like any other class of men" included "the superior and the inferior" alike.[29] Yet these critiques assumed a sharper quality in the writings of *nahḍa* (Arab renaissance) intellectuals, many of whom began their education within *katātīb*, pursued advanced studies in European cities, and returned to their native lands with a passion for political and social reform.[30] These writers were not just criticizing the *kuttāb* in the abstract, but measuring its deficiencies in comparison to contemporary European models and linking its shortcomings to the political and cultural status of the nation as a whole. In this regard, the modernist critique of the *kuttāb* was not a mere continuation of medieval jesting.

One of the more famous—and entertaining—treatments of the subject can be found in *al-Ayyam* (The Days), the autobiography of Taha Hussein. His account makes reference to the physical violence found within the *kuttāb*, but the primary faults of the teacher (mockingly referred to as "Our Master") and his assistant ("the *'Arif*" or "knowing one") are their dishonesty, corruption and blatant opportunism. The teachers are seen as benefiting from an established bribery ring, wherein children offer dates, sugar and money in order to secure their teachers' favor, or at the very least, to mitigate their blows. The *kuttāb* teacher treats Taha with benign

[29] Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*: 36.
[30] Muhsin Jasim Musawi, *Islam on the Street: Religion in Modern Arabic Literature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

neglect— purchased through such bribes—and allows him the freedom to play and converse with other children while almost completely ignoring his studies. His abiding interest remains his own financial gain in the form of school fees, food, drinks, clothing and other gifts given upon a child's memorization of the Qur'an. This "capacity for falsehood" is what remains with the young child even after the Qur'anic verses dim from his memory.[31]

During the Mandate period, Taha Hussein's autobiography would became required reading in one of Palestine's most prominent nationalist schools, al-Najah in Nablus. The modernist critique of the *kuttāb* reached a fevered pitch within institutions like al-Najah, which positioned itself as the enlightened antithesis of the "vile *kuttāb*." Textbooks authored by the school's headmaster, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, reflected a heightened awareness of the link between traditional schooling, public ignorance and political weakness. Writing of the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, Darwaza singled out its educational failures as one of the government's key offences:

> The (Ottoman) government was not interested in opening schools and educating the country's children, because education opens the people's minds, makes them aware of their rights, and causes them to demand them. Pupils would learn reading and writing in the vile *katātīb* …sitting on the earth, and the teachers that taught them did not know much of anything. And their salaries did not come from the government, but [they] would rather take bread from every child.
>
> The situation of governments in Europe was much better than this state. Because they convened representatives of the people, created assemblies out of them, and consulted (*tashāwara*) them in everything they wanted to do. They took an interest in the country's condition, and improved schools and roads, while no citizen dared to accept a bribe. As a result of this the

[31] Taha Hussein, *The Days* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997), 38. Originally published in Arabic in 1929.

> countries of Europe progressed, while the Ottoman countries became degenerate and weak.[32]

A further element of the modernist critique sprang from the association of communal schools with popular forms of religiosity, and particularly, with mysticism. Anxiety over the influence of Hasidism in European Jewish communities was widespread among the rationalist members of the *Haskalah*, who charged Hasidism with fostering a culture of illogic and superstition.[33] Eager to find a place for Jews within the emerging social and political order promised by the Enlightenment, Hasidism represented a major obstacle that threatened the attainment of a pluralistic accord founded on reason. Conversely, it was the medieval figure Maimonides and his famed adoption of Aristotelian logic that *maskilim* looked to as a source of inspiration for the modern Jewish renaissance.[34]

Within the spectrum of communal figures that undermined the Enlightenment sensibility, the *ḫeder* teacher was among the worst offenders. A recurring trop in *maskilic* literature charged him with provoking superstition and anxiety within children who, so afraid of ghosts, would recoil from their own shadows. Furthermore, this educational culture of irrationalism was thought to

---

[32] Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *durūs al-tārikh al-'arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* (Cairo: al-mutba'a al-salfiya, 1929), 292.

[33] The classical account of this fraught relationship appears in Raphael Mahler's *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, which, despite its ideological commitment to advancing a Marxist and Zionist view of Jewish history, reviews many important sources related to the conflict between *maskilim* and Hasidism. Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1984). For a more detailed account of these battles, many of which appeared at the communal level, see Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: a history of conflict* (Oxford; Portland, Or.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005).

[34] Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah* (Berlin: Leiden, 1979), 133; n. 5. As Yaakob Dweck has shown, the embrace of Maimonides as a bulwark against mysticism was already apparent in 17th century Venice. See Yaakob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

represent the source of the (male) Jew's supposed physical and spiritual degeneration. It is within its walls and at the hands of its cruel teachers that the Jew emerges as weak, uncultured, and disconnected from nature.[35]

In a similar fashion, Sufism functioned within the metanarrative of Islamic modernism as a barrier that separated Arab Muslims from "authentic" Islam. Sufism and popular customs like visits to the tombs of local saints were derided as sources of unlawful innovation (*bida'*) that had corrupted Islam's rationalistic foundations. The fact that Sufi practices were closely tied to local and popular forms of piety similarly undermined the idea that "true" Islam existed in a singular form that was textually determined. Reformers held that mysticism must be forcibly rooted out from Muslim communities—beginning, of course, with schoolteachers—in order to combat the inter-connected slides toward popular ignorance and political subjugation. In his autobiography, for instance, Taha Hussein explicitly identified Sufism as the premier source of social backwardness, noting that, "the country people, including their old men, youths, lads and women, have a particular mentality in which is simplicity, mysticism and ignorance. And those who have had the greatest share in producing this mentality are the Sufis."[36]

Despite these failings, the old and corrupt could become the basis of the new and noble if "tradition" could be stripped down to its elemental core. But how could such a transformation be enacted? As I will argue, the reform—and indeed, creation of—modern Jewish and Islamic religious education operated on three levels. First, reformers decried the inauthenticity of contemporary religious practices, which had

[35] Holtzman, "ben hoka'ah l'hitrafkut: ha-ḥeder b'sifrut ha-zichronot u'v'sifrut ha-ivrit," 79.
[36] Hussein, *The Days*: 57.

seemingly corrupted the genuine essence of each religious system—the existence of which, it is worth adding, was a wholly modern discovery. Second, they argued for the inherent compatibility of this essence with "universal" (i.e. European) epistemic and pedagogic models. Finally, they sought a union with the bureaucratic and administrative capacities of the modern state to centralize control over religious knowledge in the hands of reformers. In what follows, I will chart these interlocking efforts through a close analysis of two formative articulations of the modernist agenda.

The *Haskalah* and the new Jewish school

Modern Jewish attempts to transform the nature of communal education can actually be traced to early modern Amsterdam, where Marrano refugees from Portugal "sought to the merge values, contents, behaviors and patterns of Western life, that they absorbed from the foreign environment to which they belonged in the past, with the traditional Jewish heritage to which they returned."[37] This attempted synthesis was reflected in the curriculum of Talmud Torah Etz Haim, which taught Bible and Hebrew (including grammar) alongside the language of the state and "general subjects." The school served as a model for *maskilim* as they launched their own reform projects in late eighteenth century Germany.

[37] Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Cycles of modernization in education: from the ḫeder to the school (maslulei modernizatsia b'ḫinuch: me ha-ḫeder l'vait ha-sefer)," in *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*, ed. David Assaf and Immanuel Etkes (Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010), 60. For a more extensive treatment of the school and the opening of similar institutions in Western Europe, see: Haim Beinart, "The exodus of Marranos from the Iberian penninsula in the 15th and 16th centuries (Hebrew)," in *Sefer zichron l'Shelomo Umberto Nachon*, ed. Roberto Bonfil (Jerusalem: Mosad Shelomoh Me'ir, Mosad Refa'el Ḳanṭoni, 1978), 63-106. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 204-06.

While is was certainly not unknown for Jews to study European languages or other "secular studies" prior to this point, doing so was usually economically driven, required for a career in trade, for example, and such activity was not tied to any ideological program. The novelty introduced by the *maskilim,* particularly in Germany, was the suggestion that such studies were of value in and of themselves.[38] Knowledge for its own sake (*lishma*) was most immediately associated with the study of Torah. As we shall see, it was not merely the *maskilim*'s suggestion that secular studies had inherent value that represented a contentious claim, but rather, the exact content of the secular that animated much of the debate.

Jewish thinkers grappling with the challenges presented by European modernity—represented most acutely in the political emancipation of the Jewish subject and the processes of secularization on which it depended—devoted much attention to the nature of different types of knowledge. Beginning with Moses Mendelssohn's argument that Jewish law was harmonious with the principles of the Enlightenment and continuing to Hermann Cohen's German-Jewish symbiosis, Jewish thinkers often presented their attempts to facilitate the inclusion of Jews into European civil society in the form of an intellectual synthesis. Yet the argument in support of a natural symbiosis between Enlightenment principles and Jewish law (or "Judaism" after the term's nineteenth century invention) had to contend with a novel form of separation on which the desired political and intellectual harmony hinged. This was the division of man into his political and religious components, the former representing the rational realm of the state wherein all were equal before a

[38] Feiner, "Programot ḫinuchiot v'idialim ḫevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḫinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825."

common law, and the latter corresponding to the supposedly private realm of faith.[39]

It was within this context, and upon the aforementioned assumptions, that the emancipation of European Jews spread across the continent. Following the Edict of Tolerance issued by the Emperor Joseph II in 1781, Jewish intellectuals debated the practical steps that were necessary to enable the inclusion of Jews into broader civil society. In an infamous open letter to the Jewish community published the following year, entitled *divrei shalom v'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth), Naphtali Herz Wessely fired one of the opening shots of the *Haskalah* by disputing the adequacy of Torah study to meet the challenges and opportunities posed by emancipation.[40] As was the case with many "enlightenment" thinkers, Wessely quite strategically placed education reform at the core of his letter, writing, "One should be educated in his youth, when his heart is unsullied by the vanities of the world and by the perversities of strange ideas. For when his heart is like clean and smooth paper it shall be easiest to write words of truth upon it, and they shall be well inscribed."[41]

Wessely's letter called for the radical transformation of Jewish learning into a system of education that would propel large-scale social integration. The main

---

[39] As Leora Batnitzky has recently highlighted, this synthesis was never without points of tension. "Mendelssohn wants to have it both ways: Judaism is a religion of law requiring action and stimulating contemplation. But when it comes to questions of universal action—that is, state law—and when it comes to universal contemplation—that is, the eternal truths of philosophy—Judaism remains separate and dispensable, except insofar as Judaism calls for obedience to the state's law." See Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*: 27.

[40] Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divre shalom ṿe-emet : li-ḳehal 'adat Yiśra'el ha-garim be-artsot* (Vienna1826). Translation throughout taken from ———, "Divrei Shalom v'Emet," in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[41] ———, "Divrei Shalom v'Emet," 63.

thrust of Wessely's argument regarded the ethical necessity to teach "*torat ha-adam*" (the Torah of man, loosely translated as "human knowledge") alongside "the Torah of God, that is, God's laws and teachings." Wessely defined *torat ha-adam* as follows:

> In general, 'human knowledge' is comprised of etiquette, the ways of morality and good character, civility and clear, graceful expression; these matters and their like are implanted in man's reason. He who possesses 'human knowledge' will gain much from the poetic expression of the divine Torah and from the ways of God that are written therein…Similarly, history, geography, astronomy and the like—which are inscribed in the mind of man as innate 'primary ideas' whose foundation is reason—produce truths in every matter of wisdom. Included in this category of knowledge are the natural sciences, which provide genuine knowledge about all things: animals, plants, minerals, the elements, meteorology (clouds and their effects), botany, anatomy, medicine, chemistry, etc. It is in man's power to study all of these phenomena by means of his senses and reason; he does not need anything divine to comprehend them.[42]

As hinted in this passage, one novelty of Wessely's classification was the association of reason with *torat ha-adam*, and the implicit suggestion that God's teachings were the realm of non-rational revelation. The idea of a sharp division between those areas of knowledge one approaches through the use of reason and those that are dictated through the (non-rational) apparatus of revelation is not a classical idea in Jewish thought. Maimonides was the most forceful voice in arguing that reason and revelation were complementary ways to access the same divine truth, and that the highest level of truth contained in the Torah could only be accessed through the use of human reason.[43] In contrast, Wessely's distinction reflects two tenets of the emerging secular order: that of "religion" as the home of non-rational faith, and that of a distinct secular realm governed by reason alone.

---

[42] Ibid.

[43] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Chp. 54.

Wessely called for an expansion of the traditional curriculum to include subjects—like European languages and modern sciences—that were deemed crucial for any emancipated Jew to possess. Yet, within the category of *torat ha-adam*, he also included subjects like etiquette, graceful expression and "the ways of morality." Wessely's critique was not, therefore, merely directed at the narrowness of Jewish learning, but at modes of Jewish behavior that were regarded as crude in contrast to (Christian) European civility.

Wessely's division of knowledge into *torat ha-adam* and *torat-elohim* could be (and was) read in a contentious and even blasphemous way, namely as positing the existence of a second Torah that competes with the divine one. Most controversially, Wessely went as far as to suggest that "he who is ignorant of the laws of God, but is versed in 'human knowledge' (*torat ha-adam*), even though the sages of Israel will not benefit from his light in the study of the Torah, he will benefit the remainder of humanity." In contrast, the person learned in the Torah of God but ignorant of *torat ha-adam* "gladdens neither the wise of his own people nor the remainder of humanity."[44] In other words, an education restricted to the Torah of God was insufficient, so much so that the scholar lacking "human knowledge" was a burden on his people and humanity as a whole. Moreover, he was inferior to someone ignorant of God's ways but schooled in those of man.

It is no surprise that such a radical upending of the traditional regard for sacred knowledge and those who possessed it generated a slew of scathing

[44] Wessely, "Divrei Shalom v'Emet," 63-64.

rebuttals.[45] Interestingly though, the rebuke was not necessarily aimed at the suggested expansion of the curriculum to include foreign languages and other subjects alongside the religious core. Writing in response to Wessely, Rabbi David ben Nathan of Lissa (Leszno in modern-day Poland) conceded that "our children shall study the sciences as an adornment" and that there was no conflict with the Emperor's wish "to teach our children an hour or two a day to speak and read the German language." However these concerns were to remain subordinate to the curriculum, the foundations of which should remain "in accordance with the command of our ancient sages of the Talmud."[46] Thus the introduction of new subjects into the curriculum represented no inherent threat insofar as they did not challenge the primacy of the Torah, "for what is primary remains primary and what is secondary remains secondary."[47] Rather, it was Wessely's suggestion that the Torah constituted an inadequate foundation for moral fashioning that drew the ire of Rabbi ben Nathan, who characterized his opponent as an "impious man," "foolish and wicked," and an "imposter," adding that even "a carcass is better than he!" [48]

Rabbi ben Nathan detected an assimilationist thrust in Wessely's letter, particularly in his assertion that ethics, civility and modes of proper conduct fell within the realm of *torat ha-adam*. Were these subjects not within the purview of

[45] It is no coincidence that the sages whose debates are recorded in the Talmud, and whose authority continues to be felt to this day, crowned themselves as the undisputed leaders of the post-exilic Jewish community. As the Talmud famously states, "*Mahn malchei rabannan*" (Who are the kings? The rabbis.) Talmud Bavli, Gittin 62a.
[46] David ben Nathan, "A Sermon Contra Wessely," in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1980), 68.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 67.

the Torah of God? How could a man learned in Torah possibly be lacking in such knowledge?

> Who of the pious students of God's laws—assuming that he is an intelligent, honest and understanding student of the Torah—is not a tribute to humanity, even if he has not learned etiquette and languages? Can such a man be lacking in 'human knowledge'? The moral instruction of the Scriptures and the words of the holy sages of the Talmud teach [one] how to behave and converse [with his fellow men.] Indeed, does not the student of Torah study the words of Maimonides in the *Book of Knowledge* and the codes of other masters which teach the path of righteous conduct, the path which is a holy path? Does not the student of Torah also study *Duties of the Heart* and other books of ethical teaching? …Even if one knows but a fraction of these laws he is awed by the depth of their ethical wisdom.[49]

By severing certain types of knowledge from the Torah of God and locating them within the newly-formed secular realm of *torat ha-adam*, Wessely implied that "etiquette, the ways of morality and good character, civility and clear, graceful expression" were qualities acquired only from outside the boundaries of Jewish thought. As such, Wessely and Rabbi ben Nathan's dispute offers a real-time demonstration of how modern Protestant notions of secular universalism and religious particularism migrated to European Jewish society.

As Gil Anidjar has observed, the "religious" has not historically fared well in its battles against secularism, but rather, religion has become "the problem…an object of criticism that needed to be no less than *transcended* (original emphasis).[50] Rabbi ben Nathan's rebuttal of Wessely is directed precisely at this attempt to render "religion" a social problem in need of solving. As one who had "shorn his beard," Wessely subsequently held that "all who have beards and sidecurls are

[49] Ibid., 68-69.
[50] Anidjar, "Secularism," 62.

deemed…to lack 'human knowledge' and to deviate from the ways of humanity."[51] Echoing Mendelssohn's division of law into the realms of the state and the individual, Wessely stressed the universal nature of human knowledge/*torat ha-adam* in contrast to the particularistic character of the Torah of God. Yet the manners of speech, modes of behavior and ethical standards he aspired toward were in fact the quite particular characteristics of contemporary non-Jewish society. To make the point more explicit, if religious particularism was to be transcended in favor of universal humanism, we might ask to which group of humans Wessely's *torat ha-adam* belonged. We have every reason to question his assumption that any property of "the human" belongs to humanity as a whole.[52] Moreover, secular knowledge in the form of *torat ha-adam,* having been removed from the realm of "religion", is freed to present itself as uniquely lacking in irrational or subjective features.

In sum, Wessely's letter reflects two interlocking secularist turns. The first is that, through the acceptance of the Protestant idea of religion as an individualistic, faith-based and private affair, the *maskilim* invented "Judaism" as a category distinct from other realms of experience. This development marks the origin of Jewish religious education in its modern-day form as a single component of a child's education, distinct from both other types of knowledge (i.e. of the past, of the

[51] Nathan, "A Sermon Contra Wessely," 69.
[52] Hannah Arendt issued one of the early critique of the universalist pretenses, but ultimate failure, of concepts such as humanism and human rights in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, writing, "The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships—except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human." As quoted (and elaborated on) in Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*: 143.

sciences, of language) and from the pre-modern learning it replaced. Second, the substance of Wessely's educational reforms represented, as I have argued, not merely the addition of scientific subjects or the teaching of foreign languages, nor simply a challenge to the authority of rabbinic leaders or the professionalization of teaching. It surely was all of these things and more. What lies beneath them—and indeed, what I am most interested in—is the severance of types of knowledge and modes of conduct from the idea of an all-encompassing whole with the Torah as its foundation. As I will argue later in this project, it is against this historical background that we must approach the Zionist attempt to remake the nature of Jewish education in Palestine.

Wessely's letter was published on the heels of the opening of the first modern Jewish school in Berlin, *ḥinuch ne'arim*, which was founded in 1778 by the wealthy *maskil* David Friedlander.[53] Its innovation did not lie in alleviating a shortage of instruction in secular subjects (*limudei ḥol*), but rather "in transforming these subjects into communal property" with their own ideological heft.[54] As Shmuel Feiner has noted, schools founded by the German *maskilim* sought to serve as an alternative to the *ḥeder* and *talmud-torah*, and included not only secular or general subjects, but a "reformed" mix of religious ones that were to be taught in a manner that differentiated them from existing forms of Jewish schooling. In this, *ḥinuch ne'arim* attempted to "create a complete balance between Jewish subjects and

[53] Feiner, "Programot ḥinuchiot v'idialim ḥevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḥinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825."
[54] Ibid., 396. See also: Elboim-Dror, "Cycles of modernization in education: from the ḥeder to the school (maslulei modernizatsia b'ḥinuch: me ha-ḥeder l'vait ha-sefer)," 61-63.

universal ones," further demanding its teachers embody this attempted harmony by being "*ba'alei sekel v'yirat hashem*" (men of intellect and fearful of God).[55]

The new school quickly gained the support of the Prussian state, which quite clearly viewed it as a vehicle to propel the large-scale transformation and "reform" of the region's Jews into productive citizens. This support also extended to the creation of a publishing house from which the message of enlightenment would be spread, not in the vulgar Yiddish vernacular, but the noble Hebrew language.[56] As the waves of the *haskalah* reached Eastern Europe in the early 19th century, *maskilim* established schools on the model provided by *ḥinuch ne'arim*. As was the case in Berlin, such schools began as private enterprises but were quickly granted state support as authorities recognized their social utility.[57]

Like Wessely, those active in Jewish educational reform embraced, and indeed depended, on the separation of intellectual realms into religious and non, Jewish and "universal", "traditional" and "modern." Into *"limudei kodesh*" (literally, studies of that which is holy) fled the spirit, the sacred text and the law. From the early nineteenth century onward, these subjects would have to compete with *"limudei ḥol*" – which encompassed foreign languages, the sciences and liberal arts, or increasingly (particularly in poor communities), vocational training.[58] In this way

[55] The description of teachers is taken from Wessely's letter, as quoted by Shmuel Feiner. See: Wessely, "Divrei Shalom v'Emet," Chp. 8. Feiner, "Programot ḥinuchiot v'idialim ḥevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'ḥinuch ne'arim' b'berlin 1778-1825," 398. The uncritical ease with which Feiner speaks of Jewish and universal values offers a good example of the theoretical pitfalls discussed earlier.
[56] Elboim-Dror, "Cycles of modernization in education: from the ḥeder to the school (maslulei modernizatsia b'ḥinuch: me ha-ḥeder l'vait ha-sefer)," 61-62.
[57] Ibid., 63-64.
[58] Pre-modern Jewish thought did speak of the *ḥol* in contrast to the *kodesh* (holy), but *ḥol* did not mean secular in our contemporary understanding of the term. For example, *ḥol ha'moed* refers to the middle days of Passover, during which it is permissible to do certain forms of work not permitted

"practical" and "useful" knowledge became synonymous with something *other* than "religious" studies, something that could no longer be learned through apprenticeships or private tutoring, and which approached a level of parity with the receding core of the Torah.

Renaissance and Defiance: the origins of Islamic education reform

We must now consider a process of educational change that took part not within Europe itself, but in the context of the European colonial expansion into Asia, Africa and elsewhere. Timothy Fitzgerald has argued this colonial encounter was crucial to the emergence of the secular state, in that "the need to describe and control non-European peoples, the emergence of empirical science, and new demands for toleration by non-conformists, all combined to redefine the meaning of 'religion' as an essentially inner form of belief separated from the public rationality of the secular state."[59] We have thus far located traces of this process in the secularization of Jewish education in 18th and 19th century Europe. We now must consider a more familiar colonial terrain, namely late 19th century Egypt, wherein scholars associated with the Islamic reform movement undertook to transform education at all levels.

---

during the first and final days of the holiday, but which are in no way devoid of the obligations that apply to the holiday as a whole. The observant Jew does not, for example, does not resume eating bread on *ḥol ha'moed* Passover.

[59] Fitzgerald, *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*, Introduction, 19; ibid. For more on the mutually constitutive nature of secularism and colonialism, see in the same volume, David Chidester, "Real and Imagined: imperial inventions of religion in colonial southern Africa;" Will Sweetman, "Colonialism all the way down? Religion and the secular in early modern writing on south India;" and Gregory D. Alles, "Rudolf Otto, cultural colonialism and the 'discovery' of the holy."

Scholars of Arab Modernism often speak of it as a phenomenon composed of three overlapping currents: first, the late nineteenth century literary *nahḍa* in which Lebanese Christians played a prominent role; second, the Islamic reform effort associated with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, among others; and finally, the adoption of Arab nationalism by a broad spectrum of secular intellectuals and political activists.[60] Yet the roots of educational reform in Arab lands pre-dated these currents and in fact originated in Ottoman administrators' anxieties regarding the Empire's ability to counter mounting European military and technological superiority. The military impetus for educational reform is significant, and certainly distinguishes this history from contemporary reform efforts occurring within European Jewish communities. Yet as we shall see, when Muslim modernists came to grapple with existing forms of education, their arguments shared certain discursive parallels with those articulated by *maskilim* a few decades earlier.

Historians generally attribute the first steps toward a modern system of education in the Ottoman Empire to the semi-autonomous governor of Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali, who launched numerous initiatives to bring the best of European sciences to Egypt in the wake of the Napoleonic retreat. He did so both out of recognition of the superior military technologies and disciplines that enabled the recent conquest, and to further challenge the authority of Ottoman rulers in Istanbul. He famously dispatched student missions to European cities to study foreign languages and translate textbooks into Arabic. In Egypt, he opened

[60] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Chapter Four will question the extent to which we should characterize members of the latter group as "secular," and if so, the ways in which their secularism departed from the European form.

professional schools for Engineering (1816), Medicine (1827), Pharmaceutics (1929), Mineralogy (1834), Agriculture (1836) and Translation (1836). [61]

Having erected such institutions, it quickly became apparent that a new system of primary schools was required to prepare students for study within them. As such, he opened government preparatory schools that provided stipends, free clothing and food to lure students away from *katātīb*. He still encountered much reluctance from parents who feared conscription, and eventually resorted to recruiting by force. "It was obvious that all the new schools, whether military, ancillary or even civil, were geared to serve a military machine. None of them was for the purely intellectual of professional training of young Egyptians."[62]

Similarly, the Sublime Porte first looked to appropriate European technical and scientific expertise in an attempt to modernize the Empire's outmoded military. In Istanbul as well as in Cairo, French advisors played a key role in proposing educational reforms and managing newly created schools.[63] The Ottoman leadership began the process of education reform slowly, in fits and starts over several decades during the mid-nineteenth century, and did not tackle the systematic reform of primary education until the 1860s.[64] Its first efforts were directed at integrating existing communal schools, such as the *kuttāb* and those managed by non-Muslim

---

[61] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 45-47.
[62] Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*: 53.
[63] Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*: 51-53.
[64] Benjamin Fortna has written a nuanced and highly readable survey of Ottoman education in the Empire's last years. See: Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For more detail about the distinct pieces of legislation and bureaucratic divisions that facilitated education reform, see: Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*.

millets, into a single legal and administrative framework. However substantive changes were limited in scope, with the primary goal being that these schools produce literate candidates for the *rushdiyye* schools wherein government clerks were trained. As such, the administrative structure attempted to build on existing forms of communal education rather than supersede them. Primary education was conceived of as properly belonging to the religious community, while secondary schools would introduce mixed schooling between different population groups as well as a broader range of subjects. [65]

In contrast to these earlier attempts to weave the reformist project into the existing structures of communal education, by the late 1860s, the "religious" nature of primary education had transformed into a problem in need of solving. In 1869, the Regulation of Public Education was promulgated, prepared under the influence of the French Minister of Education, Jean Victor Duruy. It reflected an ambitious plan to introduce universal compulsory education and to transfer control of all schools to the Ottoman state. The Regulation marked the abandonment of the policy that attempted to strategically employ existing modes of religious learning; rather, it envisioned a system of state primary schools with a utilitarian curriculum, supervised by a centralized bureaucracy and overseen by a professional class of teachers.[66]

While the Ottomans never achieved universal education as was hoped, they did open and manage a number of schools in Palestine: the *sanjak* of Jerusalem

[65] Selcuk Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 : Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden: Boston, 2001), 44.
[66] Ibid., 86-90; 108-11.

included 158 such schools in 1885, and another 35 existed in the *kaza* of Jenin.[67] However impressive this may appear, there are indications that some Palestinian Muslims opposed the Ottoman government's attempts to open state schools in the late nineteenth century, fearing that "the distinctly religious basis of education would be threatened, with consequent disturbances of the established social order."[68] Thus, it was in part because education was conceived of as an Islamic practice that attempts to organize new types of schooling were poorly received by the *'ulema*. Within this framework, the creation of government primary schools served by a professional class of trained teachers represented yet another reduction in the scope of activities under their direct control.

Far from representing the mere reform of communal schooling, the new system of education attempted, though did not necessarily achieve, a revolutionary break with the *katātīb* that preceded it. The Ottoman school system shared many features with the Mandatory one that would replace it, including a secularized curriculum (here meaning a curriculum divided into distinct religious and non-religious components), uniform textbooks and teachers that were—theoretically at least—graduates of specialized professional schools.[69] Religious instruction formed a separate and important component of the Ottoman public school curriculum, one that arguably became even more pronounced during the era of Hamidian regime,

---

[67] Ibid., 111.
[68] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 181.
[69] In practice this does not seem to have been the case. Memoirs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often depicted "that the schoolmasters of the public *ibtidai* schools and most of the instructors were wearing white turbans, i.e. were probably members of the 'ulema." See: Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 : Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*: 260.

which "tried to combat nationalist secession by stressing religious and authoritarian values in education."[70]

Thus on one hand, the adoption of new types of schooling was conceived of as a defensive move crucial to the creation of a new generation of elite military leaders and technocrats. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, a specifically Arab effort was underway to reform modes of Islamic learning that was linked less to bureaucratic and military necessity and more deeply concerned with the question of cultural renaissance. This *nahḍa* (literally: rebirth or renaissance) of Arab thought had multiple expressions and its participants represented a wide range of religious backgrounds.[71] While there were points of disagreement, the movement stressed the primacy of the Arabic language as a tool for national revival (particularly in opposition to Ottoman Turkish), spoke in terms of an Islamic civilization system and advocated religious reform on the basis of new interpretations of *shari'a* that attempted to reconcile it with the "needs of the time."[72]

The immediate past and present were regarded as periods of spiritual decline and intellectual stagnation brought on by the corruption of "true" Islam on one hand, and the political subjugation of the Arab nation to the Turkish yoke on the

---

[70] Ibid., 180.

[71] While earlier historians tended to draw a direct line from the literary *nahḍa* of the late nineteenth century to the emergence of Arab nationalism in the early twentieth, more recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of Islamic reformists to the emergence of full-fledged Arab nationalism in the first decades of the twentieth century. See Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva Simon's *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[72] The idea that Islam is not principally a religion, but rather a civilization, was introduced into Islamic Modernist circles by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Influenced by Guizot's famous theory of civilization, al-Afghani argued that there had been a Golden Age of Islam wherein "the *umma* had all the necessary attributes of a flourishing civilization," and that a return to this civilizational glory was possible by "accepting those fruits of reason, the sciences of Europe, but also, and more fundamentally, by restoring the unity of the *umma*." Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*: 115.

other.[73] The latter narrative found wide acceptance among both Arab intellectuals and audiences abroad. British officials in Palestine, for instance, made frequent reference to this historical explanation in arguing that the Arabs of Palestine were not *inherently* inferior to the Jews; rather, differences among the two were conceived as a product of circumstance. Writing in January 1937, Jerome Farrell, the Director of Education for the Government of Palestine, noted that "the Jews do no in fact show any superior merit since the relative backwardness of the Arabs must be attributable to the Turkish rulers while the recent cultural advance of the European and American Jew derives from their emancipated position in liberal Western society of the 19th century."[74]

Muslim modernists formed a crucial subset of the intellectuals who participated in the Arab *nahḍa*, and are the most relevant to the current enquiry because their writings often engaged with attempts to overthrow prevailing modes of Islamic education. Defining the status of different ontological categories—such as which subjects could be adopted, and for which purposes—formed the conceptual foundation on which education reform was based. As I will argue, determining the nature and origins of "secular" education, and specifically the modern sciences, was inextricably linked to the greater project of defining the essence of Islam.

Depictions of that essence were of course being forwarded daily by contemporary European thinkers and Orientalists ranging from Edward Lane to

[73] Advocates of Islamic revival often argued that the return of the caliphate to Arab hands was crucial to the movement's success. The same point was famously made by Wilfred Scawen Blunt in his 1882 work, *The Future of Islam*. Ibid., 268.
[74] Farrell, Jerome. "Note on the principles upon which the grant-in-aid of the Jewish Public School System should be estimated and applied." January 29, 1937. TNA, CO 733/346/17.

Goethe and Ernst Renan. Islam was variously associated with cultural backwardness, political despotism and intellectual stagnation; a fundamental incompatibility of Islam with European modernity lay at the heart of these assessments.[75] Against this flurry of Orientalist projections, Muslim modernists sought to defend Islam not by rejecting the notion that it contained a single "essence", but by arguing that the essence of Islam was something other than what contemporary Muslims practiced. Muhammad 'Abduh articulated this position upon his return from France in the late 1880s, famously stating, "I went to the West and saw Islam, but no Muslims; I got back to the East and saw Muslims, but not Islam." The true essence of Islam, it was argued, was not incompatible with European modernity and the wealth, technical progress and political institutions it had generated. Rather, true Islam was incompatible with anything *other* than reason, prosperity and justice; thus the capacity, in 'Abduh's analysis, of Islam to be present where Muslims were not.

Modernists argued that it was only through deviating away from Islam's inherent rationalism that Muslims had fallen into centuries of cultural and political degeneracy. Beginning with 'Abduh's mentor, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the major thrust of this argument held that because of Islam's rationalist core, there existed within it a unique harmony between the religious and rational sciences. Thus, no theological barriers stood before the adoption of modern sciences or technological

[75] Edward Said performed the monumental task of rendering these negative characterizations familiar to scholars in a wide range of disciples. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979). Of particular note is Ernst Renan's lecture entitled *L'Islamisme et la Science*, which argued the fundamental incompatibility of Islam with modern scientific thought. Al-Afghani devoted much energy refuting this claim as part of his defense of Islam. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*: 112-14.

innovations. On the contrary, harmony between religious and scientific knowledge was the ideal state from which man had deviated. Writing in his first work, *Risalat al-Taūḥid* (The Theology of Unity), Muhammad 'Abduh attributed part of the corruption that characterized pre-Islamic times to the unjustified alienation of religious and scientific thought:

> But in the course of a few generations the resolve of men grew weak and weary of it [religion]…The custodians abandoned all its principles, except one they mistakenly supposed to be its strongest pillar and chief ground, namely the veto on intellectual enquiry into faith, or indeed into the details of the universe and on the pursuit of the secret things of the mind. They promulgated the principle that reason and religion had nothing in common, but that rather religion was the inveterate enemy of science. It was not simply that this view could be taken by anyone for himself: rather they strenuously imposed it as the proper thing for all…Concord, co-operation and peace were ousted: schism, contention and strife reigned in their place. And so men continued until the advent of Islam.[76]

Islam's unique contribution to mankind was consequently cast as restoring the proper union between reason and religious belief. "Islam supervened, to present its case for reason, to call on mind and intelligence for action, to take emotion and feeling into partnership for man's guidance to both earthy and heavenly blessedness."[77] In ways that echoed Moses Mendelsohn's attempt to demonstrate the fundamental compatibility of Jewish law and Enlightenment principles, the essential harmony of Islam and "reason"—acting as a moniker for all types of technical and social progress—became the central tenet of late nineteenth century Islamic Modernism.

---

[76] Muhammad 'Abduh, *Risalat al-Tauhid*, Cairo, 1897. English translation prepared by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg, see Abduh Muhammad, *The Theology of Unity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 133.
[77] Ibid., 134.

The second front of the Modernist assault involved advocating a direct relationship to the Qur'an and Hadith that was unmediated by centuries of medieval commentary. In this, Muslim reformers echoed the *haskalic* (and later, Zionist) contempt for the legalistic Talmud in favor of the Hebrew Bible itself. Islam, it was claimed, was in need of its own Luther, and calls for his emergence came not merely from European observers, but from Muslim reformers themselves.[78] For the latter, the most immediate challenge was to overcome what they viewed as slavish adherence to juridical emulation, or *taqlīd*. The Syrian cleric 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi famously attacked *taqlīd* in a 1901 essay entitled *Jurisprudence and Sufism,* in which he granted no insurmountable credit to the twelve centuries of legal interpretation and argued against necessary allegiance to one of the four Sunni law schools. Rather, he went as far as to argue that juridical decisions based on these precedents were actually un-Islamic in spirit, dismissing them as acts of imitation (the literal meaning of *taqlīd*) at a time when innovation was urgently required.[79]

New interpretations were to be generated through the use of *ijtihad,* independent juridical reasoning. It is here that modernists' turn to "reason" (*'aql*) as the essence of Islam displayed the most marked contradictions. On one hand, reformers' condemnation of local practices and Sufi customs clearly represented an attempt to centralize control of religious knowledge in the hands of select members of the *'ulema*, who alone claimed the capacity to understand the true nature of

[78] Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. *F. des Debats*, May 18-19, 1883. (reprinted in French translation of *al-Radd 'ala'l-Dhahriyyin*). Quoted in Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*: 120-23.
[79] David Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 55-59.

Islam.[80] Yet on the other hand, reformers embraced the use of *ijtihad* as a means to accommodate Islamic practice with contemporary needs. In theory, *ijtihad* was something that any educated individual could do for him or herself, effectively meaning, "Legal authority on religious questions would no longer reside in the hands of the scholars, but would be possessed by ordinary individuals."[81] Conservative members of the *'ulema* rightly pointed out that the displacement of legal rulings into the hands of each individual would mean the undermining of judicial precedent and with it, the entire structure of *shari'a*. Thus on one hand, the individual should be able to arrive at his or her own legal judgments. On the other, this privilege clearly should not be extended to the masses of clerics, Sufi sheikhs and village imams to whom all social backwardness was attributed. Quite the contrary, the latter groups were the most in need of centralized supervision in order to purge them of irrational elements. As we shall see, the fact that communal education was concentrated in the hands of the latter groups posed an immediate threat to the Modernist project, and thus, in their eyes, to the progress of Islamic societies everywhere.

[80] Al-Afghani in particular distinguished between religion of the "the few" who were able to grasp the subtleties of religious truth and for whom reason was an essential tool, and "the masses" who were satisfied by religious symbols. While the truth of philosophy and the truth of prophecy were one in the same, only the few were capable of grasping the former, while prophecy was designed for the masses. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*: 123.

[81] Indira Falk Gesink, "Islamic Reformation: A History of Madrasa Reform and Legal Change in Egypt," in *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths*, ed. Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 33-34.

The Educational Program of Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh

Many of these strains of thought crystalized in the writings of Muhammad 'Abduh, perhaps the best known among Muslim modernists and an intellectual forefather of *salafi* movements. Significantly for our purposes, 'Abduh wrote extensively about education and the need for its administrative, bureaucratic and curricular reform. His advocacy in this regard was not merely an intellectual exercise; rather he was intimately involved in designing and implementing reform plans for both the Ottoman and Egyptian states, in addition to his attempts to transform al-Azhar.

His influence was felt throughout modernist circles in Greater Syria, particularly among educators and select members of the *'ulema*.[82] In his diary from the First World War, for example, the Palestinian solider Ihsan Turjman recounts discussing the works of Muhammad 'Abduh and Qasim Amin at the home of the Palestinian educator, Khalil Sakakini, with a group that included Is'af Nashashibi, Haj Amin al-Husseini and Ishaq Darwish.[83] As I will discuss later in this study, one of Sheikh 'Abduh's students would eventually become a high-ranking official in the Department of Education for the Government of Palestine and assume control over the syllabus for religious instruction. Given the porous political boundaries that existed and the migration of knowledge and practices they encouraged, a closer examination of 'Abduh's educational writings offers a way to anchor the discrete educational history of Palestine in its larger intellectual context.

---

[82] Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*.
[83] From "The Diary of Ihsan Turjman" in Salim Tamari, *The Year of the Locust* (Berkeley University of California Press, 2011), 110.

'Abduh's view of education as a panacea for a range of political, social and economic ills mirrored the optimism common in late Ottoman circles.[84] Further influenced by the utilitarian element found in the earlier writings of Rifa' al-Tahtawi, Muhammad 'Abduh reportedly appreciated Spencer's *Education, Intellectual, Moral and Physical* and called on him during a 1903 visit to London.[85] Yet the greatest influence on 'Abduh's thought was no doubt his teacher and mentor, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. As mentioned above, 'Abduh argued that Islam's unique contribution lie in reuniting religious truth with reason, thereby reconstituting a natural harmony that had been wrongfully torn asunder by the Christian separation of reason from faith. Broadly speaking, such logic functioned to render permissible certain bodies of knowledge—ranging from philosophy to foreign languages and the empirical sciences—that had once flourished under Islam, but which had ceased to be widely studied in the *madāris*.

'Abduh authored three extensive memorandums on education reform. In 1887 he wrote to the *Sheikh al-Islam* in Istanbul and argued that the reform of religious education constituted a project of the utmost political importance.[86] Secondly, he authored a report for the local Ottoman governor of Syria that criticized the influence of foreign schools and called upon the state to found competing institutions to foster a common Ottoman identity.[87] Finally, he presented

---

[84] Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the state, and education in the late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chp. 2.
[85] Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*: 70.
[86] Muhammad 'Abduh, "lā'iḥa iṣlāḥ al-ta'līm al-'othmānī," in *al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-Imam al-Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, ed. Muhammad 'Imarah (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993), 3: 71-85.
[87]———, "la'iha islah al-qutr al-suri," in *al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-Imam al-Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, ed. Muhammad 'Imarah (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993), 3: 93-101. Writing on foreign schools, he famously stated, "let parents refrain from sending their children to foreign schools that tend to

yet another series of recommendations to the khedive Tawfiq and Lord Cromer upon his return to Egypt in 1889.[88] All three reports offer variations of the central corpus of ideas for which ‘Abduh became famous. The fact that they were all prepared for (but not always at the request of) the state does not necessarily undermine their credibility as offering a genuine reflection of his views. It is true that his prescriptions are articulated in a highly functionalist manner wherein it is only through the proper type of religious schooling that the state can produce loyal, efficient subjects willing to sacrifice on its behalf. While the linkage of education reform to the health of the state may thus be exaggerated, it is not inconsistent with his thought if one considers his faith in education as the key to successfully confronting a broad range of social, political and economic challenges.

The report that ‘Abduh submitted to the *Sheikh al-Islam* is particularly significant and it is this series of recommendations that I will examine here. It was sent, first of all, to the highest authority on Islamic legal matters in the Ottoman Empire, and not to the Sultan, Grand Vizier or one of the officers who attended to administrative affairs. Yet its principle argument was that that religious education in

---

change their habits and religious faith, until God ordains that religious instruction be excluded from all schools throughout the world, that it be given in special institutions only, and that the schools be restricted to teaching subjects other than religion—an impossible development in our lands.” Quoted in Tibawi, *Islamic education: its traditions and modernization into the Arab national systems*: 71.

[88] Muhammad 'Abduh, "Mashru' islah al-tarbiya fi Misr," in *al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-Imam al-Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, ed. Muhammad 'Imarah (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993), 3:106-22. According to ‘Imarah, this report was written sometime prior to ‘Abduh’s return to Egypt in 1889, not afterward, as was claimed by Rashid Rida in his biography of ‘Abduh. Additionally, there seems to be some scholarly disagreement over how his recommendations were received. While Tibawi claims that Lord Cromer rejected his proposals, a more recent articled by Indira Falk Gesink states that it was the khedive Tawfiq who rejected his reforms and prevented him from attaining a teaching post due to the fear of his influence over Egypt’s youth. Cromer, Gesink adds, actually helped ‘Abduh gain employment as a civil court judge and as a member of a council of religious advisors. See: Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*: 77. Gesink, "Islamic Reformation: A History of Madrasa Reform and Legal Change in Egypt," 29.

the Empire had failed and that the consequences of this fact were not primarily, as it might have been in earlier times, the erosion of the general moral order or the weakening of individual piety; rather, and far more dire, deficiencies in religious education were gradually undermining the state itself. The timing was not insignificant, as 'Abduh submitted his recommendations in 1887 following a slew of political and military defeats that stripped the Empire of several key provinces: Serbia and Montenegro (gained independence in 1878), Bosnia-Herzegovina (occupied by Austria-Hungary in 1878), Cyprus (occupied by Britain in 1878), Tunisia (occupied by France in 1881) and Egypt (occupied by Britain in 1882).

'Abduh's recommendations also followed the decision to abandon attempts to incorporate *katātīb* and other communal schools into a unified educational system and to instead found new (and competing) primary schools. It is the latter schools which were the subject of 'Abduh's report. As Benjamin Fortna has argued, these state schools were not "secular" in any sense (and indeed the term itself is rather misplaced in this context), and there is evidence that the political crises and territorial losses of the late Ottoman period led to a renewed emphasis on Islam within schools, including the development of institutional supervision meant to ensure students' proper behavior.[89] Within this framework, 'Abduh's memorandum offers an instructive example of the practical means whereby historically diverse patterns of religious learning were transformed into an educational system at the hands of the state that aimed at, even if it did not achieve, a certain level of bureaucratic standardization and curricular uniformity.

[89] Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the state, and education in the late Ottoman Empire*.

In language that echoed contemporary statements regarding the upheaval in Mount Lebanon,[90] ignorance (*jahl*) functions in 'Abduh's writings as social force that undermines respect for Islam, enables foreign domination and weakens the individual's loyalty to the state. Ignorance is first and foremost a disease of the masses and the religious leaders that cater to their needs, characterized here as "believers along the lines of the ignorant [ones] that preceded us."[91] His use of ignorance (*jahl*) and its derivatives is highly suggestive of the period of *Jahaliya* (the "age of ignorance" prior to Islam), and corresponds with the overall sense that contemporary Muslims have deviated from the proper path:

> The passage of time has indeed injured the souls of Muslims, and the days have harmed the tenets of their belief, and the bonds of their conviction have weakened, which has enveloped them in the darkness of ignorance [concerning] the foundations of their religion, and weakness has indeed succeeded the decay in morals, the regression of character, and degeneration in spirit, until most of the public has become similar to animals of the field.[92]

This "religious sickness," 'Abduh continued, "has already cleared the way for foreign demons to enter into the hearts of many Muslims," a fact that was most clearly visible in the large number of Muslim children attending Christian missionary schools. These schools, he claimed, disparaged Islam and thereby alienated pupils both from their religious heritage and the Ottoman state. For children attending missionary schools, "their education will not cease until their hearts are emptied of every Islamic tie," leading them to become Muslims in name alone.[93]

---

[90] Ussama Samir Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000).
[91] 'Abduh, "lā'iḥa iṣlāḥ al-ta'līm al-'othmānī," 75.
[92] Ibid., 72.
[93] Ibid., 73.

On the other hand, ‘Abduh condemned the communal forms learning—*katātīb* and *madāris*—as completely devoid of meaningful religious instruction (*al-ta‘līm al-dīnī*). So too were the state professional and military academies, wherein ‘Abduh suggested that the absence of proper religious instruction produced graduates prone to disloyalty. “For if they are called upon to defend the nation (*milla*) or the state (*dawla*), they will rely on leisure, be inclined toward betrayal, and seek to save themselves by any means.”[94] There was “but one reason” for this sorry state of affairs, namely, the inadequacy of religious instruction (*al-qusūr fi al-ta‘līm al-dīnī*). It follows from ‘Abduh’s discursive logic that the sole cure for this sickness lies in a particular type of educational reform.

In the second half of the report, ‘Abduh outlined a detailed and hierarchical plan for Islamic education in Ottoman public schools. It is undeniably an elitist structure wherein the pupil would be exposed only to the level of religious knowledge deemed appropriate for his social position. “And thus we partition the classes of people into three [categories], and determine for each one of them the limit of these disciplines [of the religious sciences].”[95] He recommended three tracks of religious education: first, in primary schools for “the children of Muslims who stop at the principles of writing, reading and something of arithmetic” and who will work in trade, agriculture or industry; second, in the *sultaniyya* schools (professional and military academies for those who would serve the state in some future capacity); and finally, in the *madāris* for “the sons of Muslims that grasped

[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 77.

what was presented" prior to this point and "revealed excellence in their understanding" of the Islamic sciences.

What is common within these three different levels of religious education is the emphasis on a unified curricula and centralized supervision of both the teaching staff and pupils. Indeed, 'Abduh composed a list of the subjects that must be included (and avoided) within each strata, adding, "It is necessary to establish [for them] religious textbooks in accordance with this perspective." For students in primary schools, their religious education should mention nothing of Islamic sectarian battles and rather focus on teaching a practical understanding of acts that are *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*. He also recommended an abridged textbook for history, which should focus on the biography of Muhammad and his companions and the moral virtues that facilitated the early Arab conquests. All this should be taught in a fashion that is succinct and easy to comprehend. [96]

The prescriptions for the upper two levels of schooling introduced more advanced topics and methods, such as the principles of jurisprudence and the methods of disputation. Yet even at the highest level of *madrasa* study, 'Abduh attempted to establish a standardized series of topics and texts that would have effectively overturned the prevailing style of learning, in which individual teachers possessed a wide degree of autonomy in selecting the subject matter on which they lectured. In 'Abduh's scheme, because these schools would produce future members of the *'ulema*, they required the utmost supervision from the Ottoman state and the *Sheikh al-Islam* himself. Furthermore, a system of examinations and formal

[96] Ibid., 78.

certification must be introduced within them, so that no one may attain a certificate to teach except after "a difficult test in the advanced fields of knowledge."[97] If the dire state of contemporary conditions stemmed from deficiencies in religious education, 'Abduh argued that enacting his recommendations would facilitate the overall rebirth of the nation through implanting in its subjects' hearts "a love of and respect for religion." Thereby the nation could finally become unified and able to attain a "single aim toward which all [the peoples'] actions aspire."[98]

As for the practical sciences, philosophy, foreign languages and other subjects not usually considered "religious" in nature, these too must be embraced, as "nothing in them damages religion, rather religion strengthens them as they strengthen it."[99] Beyond believing in this epistemic symbiosis, 'Abduh most likely had a more pragmatic goal in mind. The reality was that parents seeking their children's social or economic betterment would turn to missionary schools because they taught foreign languages and modern sciences. Given the strong association between these subjects and commercial gain, the only means through which to keep the masses within the fold of Islam was to transform Islamic education.

Looking at 'Abduh's recommendations, we are able to grasp a central feature that distinguished the modernist approach to religious schooling from that popular in colonial circles. As we shall see in our analysis of British educational policies in Palestine, the association of religious education with social conservatism and political stability lay at the heart of the Mandatory government's support for Jewish

[97] Ibid., 83.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

and Islamic schooling. In contrast, modernists of both traditions looked to religious education—of a transformed variety—as the vehicle through which to achieve social and political change, even if, as in 'Abduh's case, that change was cast in terms of a return to authentic Islamic principles. This analysis highlights the creative interplay between "old" and "new" systems of schooling: it was arguably only through revolutionary change—pedagogic, administrative, and curricular—that religious education could preserve any traces of the old moral order.

Implementing those changes required nothing less than the administrative machinery of the modern state, the only entity capable of unifying curricula, establishing teaching credentials and supervising a diffuse network of schools. 'Abduh's entreaties to the Sublime Porte to combat the seeds of religious ignorance through a streamlined educational order should not then, be read as an example of a pre-modern sensibilities reacting against Ottoman Modernity. New and old, modern and traditional, secular and religious – scholars shy away from these binaries with good reason. Here we can see a practical illustration of how limited they are as either descriptive terms or markers of eras. The new and old animate, rather than replace, one another, just as modernity begets new ways of being traditional and secular technologies produce mechanisms for nurturing religious life.

These debates were far from tangential to later events in Palestine. Egypt served as the most immediate example for its education administrators, and the first Director of Education for the Government of Palestine, Humphrey Bowman, served

in the Education Department in Egypt from 1903-1911.[100] The syllabus adopted for government public schools in Palestine was modeled on the Egyptian one, and the modernist sheikh who created the curriculum for religious education was himself a former student of Muhammad 'Abduh.[101]

Building on the observations and theoretical frames established in this chapter, the remainder of this study will trace these early stirrings of reform through their incarnation in the form of modern Jewish and Islamic schools in Mandate Palestine. There, Jewish and Muslim modernists crossed paths not only with one another, but also with British colonial officials who came bearing definitive notions regarding education and the role of religious instruction within it. The chapters that follow will elucidate why Mandate Palestine offered a unique setting for defining the modern relationship between religion, mass education and political identity – the legacies of which, we might add, are still very much alive.

[100] Humphrey Ernest Bowman, *Middle-East Window*, 1 vols. (Lond.: Longmans, 1942), Part II: Egypt 1903-11.
[101] Most probably Sheikh Hussam al-Din Jarallah. For more on Shiekh Jarallah, see Chapter Four.

Chapter Two

The Foundations of British Education Policy in Palestine

This chapter will offer an overview of British educational policies in Mandate Palestine. While portions of this chapter offer a glimpse into issues beyond the immediate scope of this project, this slightly expanded view is crucial in light of the fact that the most authoritative account of education during the period remains Abdul Latif Tibawi's 1956 study. My goal here is not to rewrite this history but to supplement it with details of central importance, largely drawn from archival sources that were not accessible until relatively recently.

This chapter will argue that a significant disconnect existed between the Government of Palestine's stated political goals and the actual consequences of its educational policies. In support of this claim, I will examine the linchpins of the government's educational order: the prioritization of primary education, the development of new forms of rural schooling, the creation of separate Arab and Jewish public school systems, and the promotion of monolingual education. What unites these disparate points of educational planning, I will suggest, was a failure to appreciate the unintended—but in hindsight, almost inevitable—political implications of what officials argued were policies adopted for purely pragmatic or pedagogic reasons. The unwillingness to acknowledge education as an inherently political practice—which would, we recall, violate the terms of what I have called the "modern educational constitution"—seems most at fault in perpetrating this disconnect between the government's political aims and the discrete policies adopted by the Department of Education. As I will argue in the remaining chapters,

the view of education as an apolitical practice was intimately connected with the government's stance toward religious instruction and its conflicts with Jewish and Muslim communities over its proper form. However, prior to turning to this conversation, we must gain some understanding of the history of education as a whole during this formative period.

Upon assuming control of public education in Palestine, the Mandatory Government articulated two interrelated goals: first, to expand access to primary education among Palestinian Arabs, which officials hoped would increase literacy rates, rationalize agricultural production, and introduce technical and vocational training. This initiative was part and parcel of the second goal, namely the policy of "equalization." Effectively, this policy stated that it was undesirable for "two races" of radically different educational levels to inhabit the same land. Whereas education among Jews was nearly universal, only a fraction of the Arab population received any form of schooling. In the words of the Director of Education, "It would be difficult to exaggerate the cumulative seriousness of the situation which has been gradually created and is still being created by the inadequacy of the educational provision made by the Government since the Occupation…The natural result of this disparity between the educational facilities offered to Arabs and Jews is to widen the cultural gulf between the two races, to prevent social intermixture on equal terms and to tend to reduce the Arabs to a position of permanent inferiority."[1]

[1] Jerome Farrell, "Note on the draft estimates of the Education Department for the financial year 1937-1938, with special reference to the expansion of urban education." April 10, 1937. TNA, CO 733/329/13.

However, the Department of Education was forced to work within the boundaries demarcated by the Mandate for Palestine and the financial stringency of the British Treasury. As such, it was arguably impossible to achieve its stated goals. For example, how were administrators to expand the system of public schools while funds were continually diverted from social services to maintain security forces? At other times, the government erected barriers that rendered achieving its stated goals all but impossible. How were educational and cultural divisions between Palestinian Arabs and Jews to be overcome when the Mandatory state gave legal sanction to separate school systems, created new administrative barriers between them and insisted on the pedagogic benefits of monolingualism? This chapter will probe these and other questions more thoroughly.

Ottoman Palestine featured a wide spectrum of schools, curricula and pedagogical methods. In 1914, ninety-five public elementary schools and three public secondary schools existed.[2] These schools were the fruits of the late 19th century Ottoman effort to make education universal and compulsory, though in reality neither goal was ever attained. The Ottoman Empire intended to create a system of public schools that would provide an alternative to religious communal schools and presumably better prepare children for modern cultural, economic and political life. As discussed in the prior chapter, officials looked to the new schools in particular to produce a class of subjects able to assume military and bureaucratic posts. After an aborted attempt to absorb communal schools into the network of

[2] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 20.

public education, Ottoman officials established a parallel network of primary schools meant to eventually supersede those managed by religious communities.[3]

Religious minorities were free to maintain their own schools, though in theory (but not in practice), the public schools were open to all Ottoman subjects. Local Christian and Jewish bodies operated schools that competed with those administered by missionary and philanthropic bodies abroad.[4] Schools maintained by the latter entities were generally free or very inexpensive to attend, and consequently, the vast majority of Christian and Jewish children were able to obtain some sort of education. Most of these schools featured a mixed syllabus laced with a heavy dose of proselytism or, particularly in philanthropic schools, efforts to "reform" the native population. The languages of instruction varied, and included Arabic, Greek, Armenian, German, Italian, French and Yiddish.

Additionally, Zionist immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century founded schools in agricultural colonies and cities. These schools were not linked administratively though they shared many of the same educational goals and were usually conducted (or at least attempted) in Hebrew. The impetus for centralized control came as a result of the infamous "language wars" of 1913, in which numerous members of the Zionist Teachers Association resigned in protest

[3] In reality, however, many public schools retained key characteristics of the *kuttāb*. For a more thorough discussion, see Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*.

[4] A small sampling of private organizations that maintained schools includes the Alliance Israélite, the Latin, Orthodox and Syrian Patriarchs, the Anglican Bishop, the Custode de Terra Santa, the Order of the Friars, the Church Missionary Society, the Jerusalem and East Mission, the Church Mission to the Jews, the Scots Mission, the Missionsgesellschaft fur das Heilige Land, the American Friends Mission, the Swedish Mission and numerous Roman Catholic bodies. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 21-23.

over the use of "foreign" languages in schools.[5] The Association created a *va'ad ha-ẖinuch* (Board of Education) and took control of twelve schools that were dedicated to teaching all subjects in Hebrew. These schools formed the nucleus of the Zionist school system, and by 1918, they numbered nearly forty. After the British occupation, supervision by the Teachers Association gave way to direct control by the Zionist Executive's newly-formed Department of Education, with the former head of the Teachers Association, Dr. Yosef Luria, as its Director. The schools themselves were divided into three "trends," each corresponding to a Zionist political party—Labor, Mizrachi (religious), and General Zionists—and supervised by an inspectorate drawn from party members.[6]

Despite the growth in Zionist education, a sizeable number of Jewish children attended Orthodox communal schools (*ẖederim, talmudei torah* or *katātīb*) or those maintained by philanthropic organizations, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Much to the chagrin of Zionist leaders, approximately one-third to one-quarter of Jewish children continued to frequent non-Zionist schools throughout the Mandate period.[7] On the whole, Ashkenazi Jews of the Old Yishuv refused to send their children to schools supervised by the Zionist Organization. Interestingly, members of the Old Yishuv who were part of Sephardi or Middle Eastern Jewish

[5] Yaakov Ben-Yosef, *Milhemet ha-safot : (ha-maavak le-`Ivrit, 1914)* (Tel Aviv: Otsar ha-moreh, Hotsaat ha-sefarim shel Histadrut ha-morim be-Yisrael, 1984).
[6] Government of Palestine Department of Education, "Note on Education in Palestine 1920-1929," (Jerusalem1929). The exact number of schools under Zionist control during this time is subject to some debate. For alternate figures see Bentwich, *Education in Israel*: 14-15. For greater detail on the early administrative structure of the Zionist schools, see Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: Vol. 2, Sections 1-2.
[7] For the 1944-45 school year, 77,968 children were enrolled in schools supervised by the Va'ad Leumi while 24,083 attended those outside the Zionist system. See: Department of Education of the Government of Palestine, *Annual Report 1945-46* (Jerusalem 1947), 5.

communities were less opposed to the educational influence of the Zionist Organization, and indeed frequently applied to it for financial assistance. As I discuss in Chapter 5, they never received it in the same measure as European Jewish immigrants because their desire to maintain a distinct sense of *edah* (loosely translated as an ethno-religious faction) strained relations with the Zionist Organization and its desire to promote a "universal" (i.e. European) Hebrew identity.[8]

Adopting the *status quo ante bellum*, the nascent Department of Education of the Government of Palestine assumed direct control of the former Ottoman public schools and nominal control of schools maintained by Zionist and other private organizations. Like their Ottoman predecessors, the Department of Education would never gain true supervisory powers over non-government schools, which greatly outnumbered public schools throughout the Mandate period.[9] As Director of Education, the Colonial Office appointed Humphrey Bowman, a seasoned colonial officer who attended Eton and Oxford before supervising education departments in the Sudan, Egypt and Iraq.[10] Bowman was highly sympathetic to the Arab cause in Palestine and wary of political Zionism, though he did not share in the outright anti-

[8] Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: 228-39.
[9] The 1923 Annual Report states that there were 312 government elementary and secondary schools versus 367 maintained by private groups. By 1945-46, the last year for which there is complete data, the Government maintained just over 500 schools in comparison to nearly 1300 under Zionist or private auspices. See Government of Palestine Department of Education *Annual Report 1923* and *Annual Report 1945-46*.
[10] As an education officer in the colonial service, Bowman was treading a well-worn path. It is estimated that from the years 1918-1938, 20-30% of Oxford and Cambridge graduates served in the colonial education administration. See R. Symonds, *Oxford and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 307.

Semitism expressed by some of his colleagues. He served from 1920-1936, when he retired and Jerome Farrell, his longtime Assistant Director, assumed his post.

Farrell was more caustic than his predecessor and had little sympathy with the national aspirations of either the Jews or Palestinian Arabs. He became famous for his long, frank dispatches to the Colonial Office, which contain both considerable insight into the problems that plagued educational planning and frequent displays of antipathy toward Jews and Arabs alike. Bowman initially expressed a great deal of reservation about Farrell's suitability for the post, describing him as a man who "rather despises Arabs, but works well with his colleagues (except G.A.)," [George Antonius] whom he famously forced out of his high level post at the Department of Education.[11] In Bowman's words:

> He [Farrell] likes to rule the roost and does not really take much notice of any opinion offered him by anyone. He is too good for the job, he thinks, and is too well qualified academically that he deserves a better post, but in a country where the lack of sympathy for the ruled does not count for too much. Here, sympathy and understanding is everything and that happens to be one of my few qualifications for the job.[12]

Though Bowman softened toward Farrell and admired his administrative efficiency, there was no doubt he was felt that his junior colleague lacked the proper sensitivity and disposition for the job, a verdict with which it is hard to disagree. For instance, following the Wailing Wall riots in 1929 and the subsequent general strike called by the Arab Executive, Bowman recounted with horror how Farrell dealt with the political tension in Nablus. "Having heard that all boys in secondary classes of Salahiyah [school] were absent on Wednesday, went there on Thursday with a

[11] Susan Silsby Boyle, *Betrayal of Palestine: The Story of George Antonius* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).
[12] Humphrey Bowman, diary entry dated June 1, 1925. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 3B.

British policeman and ordered 50% of the boys caned by him. Result: boys left school, joined general rabble, made a riot and were arrested. Beaten again by police in barracks. Result: general strike in Nablus by parents against sending children to school on Saturday."[13] Farrell served until the end of 1946 when Bernard de Bunsen, a former inspector, succeeded him. I will mainly discuss the views and policies associated with the first two directors, as de Bunsen only filled the post for eighteen months before the Mandate terminated.

Soon after the occupation of Palestine, the British military government reopened Ottoman public schools that had been closed during the war and changed the language of instruction to Arabic. They established teachers training colleges for men and women and began a school expansion campaign in both towns and villages, opening approximately 75 schools a year. The civilian government continued this expansion program only through 1922, when it was suspended due to financial stringency.[14] Expansion moved at a much slower pace throughout the remainder of the Mandate, leading Tibawi to argue, "Future historians…will not fail to observe that a *de facto* military administration was able to open within two years, comparatively more schools than a *de jure* government could open within more than a quarter of a century, and that while the action of the former was guided by a well conceived plan, the action of the latter was guided by little or no long-range planning."[15]

---

[13] Humphrey Bowman, diary entry dated September 26, 1929. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 3B.
[14] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 156-7.
[15]Ibid., 155.

While Tibawi was right that educational policy during this period was often haphazard and disjointed, we can nonetheless identify a number of underlying principles that guided its development. As a rule, colonies were expected to be self-sustaining and finance their own social services. As in other colonial settings, because police and "security" spending was disproportionately high, few resources remained for education. The immediate consequence was that public education was consistently and dramatically underfinanced. Consequently, the Government was unable to offer any educational services to the majority of the Arab population throughout the Mandate period. In 1936, the Peel Commission expressed dismay that schools existed in only 293 out of Palestine's 780 villages, and that the forty-two percent of applicants rejected annually from rural schools due to lack of accommodation did "not include all the children in all the other villages where there are no schools, who may be panting for education."[16] In 1945-46, the last year for which there are complete estimates, there were approximately 124,000 Arab children in public or private schools out of an estimated school-age population of 300,000.[17] Thus after twenty-five years of British rule, nearly sixty percent of Palestinian Arab children were still without access to public education.

The government education budget never reached more than seven percent of annual expenditures, and for most years it was less than five percent.[18] The funds available for education and other social services were destined to remain paltry as

[16] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," in *Palestine Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 48.
[17] Department of Education, Government of Palestine, *Annual Report 1945-46*: 4.
[18] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 273.

long as the top financial priority was "security." This spending category—which financed the British colonial administration, the police force and the prison system, i.e. all the tools necessary to overpower opposition to the Mandate by sheer force—accounted for 15-20% of all government expenditure.[19] In sum, a vast amount of funds available to the Government of Palestine, derived primarily from local taxation, went toward maintaining the British occupation.

Second, the meager funds earmarked for education went hand-in-hand with an attempt to decentralize school funding and "empower" local communities to open and finance their own institutions. Decentralization only occurred in financial terms though, and not in matters of administration or curriculum. Beginning in the early 1930s, Local Education Authorities were required to contribute toward the opening and maintenance of schools, but were not consulted in matters concerning the teaching staff, textbooks or syllabi. While the Department of Education consistently maintained that financial decentralization was a form of empowerment, in reality it was too heavy a burden to bear for most *fellahin*, who were in an almost permanent state of financial crisis. Unlike in towns, where the schools were built or rented and maintained entirely by the government, villages were initially required to provide the school building and furnishings, and later, to provide LP 75 toward

[19] For the 1921-1922 fiscal year, the Government of Palestine spent LP 210,398 on Police and Prisons out of a total annual expenditure of LP 1,259,587, accounting for 16.7% of annual expenditures, versus 4% (LP 50,079) directed toward education. In 1926-27, Police and Prisons dropped slightly to account for 14.7% of annual expenditures, still outpacing education (5.5%). See: *Annual Report for Palestine and Transjordan for the year 1928*. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1929).

the construction of the building. The government would then appoint a teacher and pay his salary.[20]

Though the administration was well aware of the heavy indebtedness of most villagers, they defended this policy before skeptical members of the Royal Commission who asked if "in the expansion of your rural schools…villages have found real difficulty in producing the money?" Bowman noted that "some villages find difficulty in doing so; other villages are more ready to come forward with their contribution," thereby implying the education scheme was not hindered by the ability of peasants to shoulder the cost of opening schools, but rather by their unwillingness to do so. Still skeptical, the PRC again asked Bowman if it was "true to say the expansion of rural schools has been checked by the incapacity of the villages to do their share?" And yet again he denied any link between government frugality, village indebtedness and the stalled expansion of rural education.[21]

Finally, the limited funds earmarked for education drove the Government of Palestine to depend heavily on private, missionary and Zionist organizations to supplement public social services, and schools in particular. As I will discuss at length in the following chapter, the Department of Education conceived of an educational structure wherein government and non-government schools would jointly constitute the public school system. In this way, the British pursued a policy that was strikingly similar to that of the French in Mandatory Lebanon and Syria, also regions with a high concentration of foreign and missionary schools. As

[20] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 156.
[21] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 47.

Elizabeth Thompson has argued in her insightful study of gender and colonial citizenship, "the highly privatized delivery of social services" mediated through missionary and other private bodies was a direct byproduct of French budgetary constraints throughout the Mandate period.[22] Such an administrative arrangement took full advantage of the presence of missionary schools "where nuns worked for a pittance" to minimize government expenditure on necessary social services.[23]

With regard to the expansion of Arab education, the Department set two goals, which were often at practical odds with one another: first, administrators prioritized primary education and sought to provide the maximum number of children with the minimum amount of schooling necessary to guarantee permanent literacy. In towns the elementary cycle was five years and in villages four; limited higher elementary or secondary opportunities existed, and indeed no publicly funded secondary school offered a full four-year course with the exception of the Government Arab College (the men's teacher training school). Village schools were designed around an "agricultural bias"— i.e. intended to provide enough knowledge to improve cultivation techniques but not so much as to make the *fellah* discontent with his lot.[24] Experience in Egypt and India had fueled British anxieties over the destabilizing economic and political effects of "literary education," and thus the primary goal in Palestine was to keep the peasantry on the land and prevent their

[22] Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 62-66; 73-90.
[23] Ibid., 63.
[24] Whether or not these schools actually succeeded in rationalizing peasant agriculture is a matter of dispute. Importantly for our purposes, education administrators viewed the acquisition of literacy as a necessary prerequisite to implementing any type of agricultural reform. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 42-43.

migration to urban areas, where it was feared they would become unemployable vagabonds, or worse yet, communists.

Village schools were thus quite distinct from those in urban areas, in which the period of schooling was longer, and the curriculum broadened to include subjects like foreign languages. The two-tiered school system was primarily designed to keep the social classes in their proper places. Yet the average Palestinian schoolboy's prospects for securing an education in urban areas were also quite dim. Due to the high level of demand, lack of teachers and insufficient accommodations, the rejection rate for applicants to public schools in urban areas averaged over 50%. For the 1929-30 school year, the rejection rate for boys applying to Jerusalem public schools was 63%. The situation improved only slightly throughout the Mandate and the average rejection rate for town schools remained above 50% for the 1945-1946 school year.[25] The contrast with Jewish education draws these figures into even sharper relief. For instance, in 1943 the city of Haifa had approximately 9000 Jewish and 7200 Arab children enrolled in schools; conversely, there were between 500-1000 Jewish and 7000 Arab children without access to formal schooling.[26]

Faced with the reality of a limited education budget, administrators prioritized primary education to the almost complete neglect of secondary schools. As I will discuss at length in my case study of the rural school, they did so mindful of the dangers associated with the more common colonial pattern of first establishing

[25] Department of Education, *Annual Report 1929-1930* and *Annual Report 1945-46*.
[26] "Protocols of the joint meeting of the local Arab and Jewish school committee of Haifa," July 26, 1943. ISA RG8 1056/35-mem.

secondary schools and colleges, and in fact, regarded their "progressive" policy with a great deal of satisfaction.[27] Outside of the Government Arab College and a few secondary classes attached to select public boys' schools, a handful of private secondary schools existed in urban areas and primarily served the upper social classes who were able to pay their fees. In his testimony before the PRC, Bowman explained the policy as one designed to maximize access to minimal education—"with a limited budget it has always seemed to me much more necessary to provide elementary education as far as one could rather than provide secondary schools"—while at the same time, providing for a small number of exceptional students to continue their studies at the secondary and post-secondary levels at government expense.[28]

There were two immediate consequences of this policy: first, secondary education was much more widespread among Jews, particularly Zionist immigrants, which could only exacerbate the gulf between them and the Palestinian Arabs;[29] second, limited access to secondary education meant a permanent shortage of teachers and consequently, yet another limitation on the pace at which new schools could be opened. Though the Men and Women's training colleges remained the primary source of new teachers throughout the Mandate, little was done to expand

---

[27] See, for example, Humphrey Bowman, "Rural Education in the Near and Middle East," in *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society Volume XXVI*, ed. The Royal Central Asian Society (London1939).
[28] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 48.
[29] For example, for the 1929-1930 school year, there were 353 pupils enrolled in Government secondary schools. By contrast, at a time when Jews represented less than 20% of the population, the Hebrew Public System included 1,465 pupils in secondary and approximately 1200 more in training or commercial schools. The Department of Education was highly critical of the Jewish system of secondary schools, which it viewed as both too restrictive (accessible chiefly to fee-paying students) and too extensive in size. Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1929-1930* (Jerusalem1931), 26, 34.

their class sizes. Thus the number of pupils in the Government Arab College in 1945-46 was barely larger than the number in 1925-26, though the population had nearly doubled.[30] Approximately twenty men entered the teaching field annually, which was hardly adequate to replace retiring teachers, to say nothing of providing personnel for new schools.

It is unclear whether the Department of Education grasped the degree to which primary and secondary education were co-dependent operations. When the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, together with the Department of Education, drafted a plan in the early 1940s to extend elementary schooling to all Palestinian Arab children living in villages of more than 300, they did not account for this mutual dependency. This incongruity prompted the Education Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to state he was "at a loss" to understand how an additional 700 schools were to be opened without any dramatic increase in the number of graduates from the teaching training colleges. Moreover, he wrote, the extremely restrictive nature of secondary education provided by the Government could in no way prepare Palestinian Arabs for the future:

> The Committee's Report appears to envisage that, at the end of the ten year period, the annual output of Arab boys with a full secondary education will still only be about 25, of whom about 15 will be earmarked as future teachers. I very much doubt whether the Arab will have been given a reasonable chance of holding his own in the proposed independent state if, apart from teachers, only 10 young men are to be turned out annually with a full secondary education.[31]

The situation was even direr with regard to female education. Bowman agreed with members of the PRC that "in these days particularly, the education of

[30] 80 pupils were enrolled in the Government Arab College in 1925-26 vs. 88 in 1945-46. Department of Education, *Annual Report 1925-26* and *Annual Report 1945-46*.
[31] C.W.M. Cox, January 27, 1942. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 2, File 2.

girls is almost, if not quite, as important as the education of boys,"[32] and yet the majority of Arab girls remained illiterate throughout the Mandate Period. During the 1945-46 school year, thirty-five town schools and fifty-five village schools were open to girls, in contrast with forty-seven town and 377 village schools for boys.[33] The curriculum in girls' schools was specifically tailored to the presumed educational needs of women inside the home. A typical syllabus would include subjects like "housewifery," infant welfare and sewing. British educationalists laid special emphasis on the development of "domestic science" in schools, generally reflected the professionalization of household work that occurred in early twentieth century England. Purely academic subjects were thought to be of little value in girls' schools, as the proper educational goals for Palestinian girls should be to "understand the value of a good home, where cleanliness, sanitation and above all the care of children are to be regarded as the aim of every woman."[34] The dreaded "literary education" was to be avoided if possible, and administrators therefore stipulated that little time should be "wasted" on subjects like history, geography and Classical Arabic.[35]

The Department of Education frequently noted that the demand for female education was strong, but that it was unable to meet this need due to the lack of qualified female teachers. The Government maintained a women teachers training college in Jerusalem and opened a rural training center in Ramallah in 1935, but the

---

[32] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 48.
[33] Department of Education, Government of Palestine, *Annual Report 1945-46*: 7.
[34] Humphrey Bowman, "The Education of Girls in Palestine," *The Palestine Bulletin*, Feb. 6, 1927. Quoted in Ellen Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 39.
[35] Ibid., 36-48.

combined annual graduates from these institutions only numbered approximately twenty-five. Administrators did not entertain the possibility of male teachers working in a girls' school, though the practice of male sheikhs teaching girls in *katātīb* was not unknown prior to the British occupation. Furthermore, the Government required female teachers to resign their posts upon marriage, thus the replacement rate for female teachers was much higher than that for their male counterparts.[36] "The trained women teachers are apt to marry as soon as they may, since they are specially prized by Arab husbands who want educated wives, and the result is we have a continual wastage of trained teachers,"[37] Bowman explained. The prohibition of married women continuing their work in the civil service, according to another high-ranking official, stemmed from the greater amount of sick leave (presumably, maternity leave) required, and "the embarrassment caused to other members of the staff and to the members of the public by their presence in a certain condition."[38] The presumed unacceptability of married women in the work force seems to be yet another example of the enforcement of "harem conditions" by a colonial power eager to demonstrate its commitment to "tradition," whether real or invented.[39]

---

[36] Ibid., 38.
[37] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 48.
[38] Quoted in ———, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*: 53.
[39] For an extended case study of British colonialism and the preservation/invention of tradition, see Nicholas Dirk's seminal work on caste and governance in colonial India, Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 2001), Chapter 8. However as Ellen Fleischmann has argued, the preservation of "tradition" could be a double-edged sword. Palestinian women effectively exploited British sensitivities to upsetting "traditional" norms in an attempt to shame the Mandatory Government and influence its policies. See Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*: Chapter 6, The Politics of the Women's Movement.

Not surprisingly, these policies led to a permanent shortage of teachers in girls' schools and an ongoing lament within the Department of Education that the expansion of female education was therefore delayed. This excuse appears, upon an examination of the archival record, completely baseless. Despite its rhetorical support for female education and lament over the shortage of qualified teachers, the Government of Palestine consistently pursued policies that dramatically limited the applicant pool. As in other realms of educational planning, a disconnect existed between officials' stated goals and the reality engendered by the policies they pursued.

For instance, the Department of Education narrowed the pool of qualified female teachers by severely restricting class sizes at the training colleges. Out of 1022 applicants to the Women's Teacher College (WTC) from 1925-1936, the school accepted only 209 women.[40] The small number of applicants accepted to the WTC annually meant no substantive expansion of girls' education could occur. The dearth of female teachers was sometimes blamed on Muslims cultural biases, though even administrators were forced to admit that this explanation was lacking. Writing in 1927, the Principal of the WTC noted:

> When we began in 1919, we could obtain Christian girls in numbers, for they led freer lives, and the attendance at mission schools had accustomed them to leave the seclusion of the home. Moslem girls, however, were very difficult to secure, only the daughters of the poorest classes or destitute orphans could be persuaded to enter a boarding school, and trained to earn their own living by teaching. In such cases the prospect of a salary was the deciding factor, and no call to a vocation. This prejudice is gradually

[40] ———, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*: 38.

> weakening, and in the entrance examination held a month ago, we had 96 applications for 21 vacant places, nearly two-thirds of these from Moslems.[41]

Reading between the lines, it would seem that the over-representation of Christian pupils in the WTC stemmed not merely from an Islamic cultural bias against women working outside the home, but also, as the report clearly notes, from the fact that "Government secondary schooling for girls does not exist."[42] Thus most applicants to the WTC were almost inevitably graduates from Christian missionary schools that offered higher primary and some secondary education to girls.

Furthermore, the Government actually *decreased* the number of female teachers by suspending scholarships to girls entering the WTC. Thus the school's enrollment during the 1920's was on average double that of the 1930's. The "fall off in the number of entries after 1930," explained the Principal of the College, "is due to the fact that no scholarships are now given until the first two years have been completed, i.e. all pay the boarding fee of LP 24 p.a."[43] Here, as elsewhere, the desirability of certain educational policies was not enough to maintain even the most meager streams of funding. It is indeed difficult to escape the rather cynical conclusion that education for girls was systematically neglected based on gendered and colonial assumptions about the superfluous nature of education for Palestinian woman. That this occurred precisely at the time that an Arab women's movement had emerged and that female education had gained widespread acceptance even in

---

[41] See "Special problems in the training of women teachers in the Near East" by Miss H. Ridler in Government of Palestine Department of Education, "Annual Report, 1926-27," (Jerusalem1928), 28-30.
[42] Ibid., 28.
[43] "Table showing the number of applications for entrance into the Government Women's Training College, Jerusalem." January 3, 1937. TNA, CO 733/346/17.

Palestinian villages is but one of the many ironies that characterized Britain's supposedly enlightened rule.[44]

The right kind of knowledge: New schooling for an old order

Palestine, being at the tail end of a long British colonial experience, offered administrators an opportunity to apply the lessons learned from previous educational debacles in India, Egypt and elsewhere. The private diaries of the first Director of Education, Humphrey Bowman, are replete with the self-assurance that he was managing education differently (and better) than was done in other places. And while their personality types differed drastically, Bowman's successor, Jerome Farrell, articulated a very similar vision regarding Palestine's educational priorities. In part, they represented a new type of colonial educator whose regard for "tradition"—represented by the triumvirate of Arabic, Islam and agriculture—distinguished them from an earlier generation of administrators. Indeed, one of the peculiarities of British education policy in Palestine was that officials understood their cultivation of tradition as representing a modern, progressive departure from older forms of rule. Understanding these departures from the "old" approach is crucial to grasping the ways in which a modernized education came to serve as the paradoxical guarantor of the traditional order. In what follows, I will briefly

[44] For a detailed analysis of the emergence of the Palestinian women's movement, see: Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*. There are numerous sources that testify to the demand for female education among the Arab population. For example, petitions from villages requesting the government open a girls' school became a common occurrence. See: Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine*. Ylana N. Miller, *Government and Society in Rural Palestine 1920-1948*, Modern Middle East Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), Chapter 6, Rural Education.

consider the Government's policy toward rural schooling and begin to examine the function of religious education within this old/new framework.

There were two shadows that lurked in the background of much of Bowman and Farrell's discussions of their educational philosophies, namely, Lord Macaulay and Lord Lugard. Lord Macaulay was a Whig politician and colonial administrator who is well-known for his role in education reform in India. Undoubtedly, his most influential act was to advocate that English, rather than Persian or Sanskrit, should be the medium of instruction in secondary schools. In his *Minute on Indian Education* of 1835, Macaulay stated that the goal of education in India was to create "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."[45] Little attention, therefore, should be devoted to expanding the system of primary schools, as the government operated on the assumption that a newly formed hybrid class of Indian civil servants would serve as intermediaries between it and the uneducated masses.

However, in light of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and later experience in Egypt, a new educational orthodoxy began to emerge. Henry Maine's late nineteenth century writings on customary law bore practical fruit in the early twentieth

[45] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education, 1835," in *Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*, ed. H. Sharp (Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965). Scholars of Palestine have sometimes failed to apprehend the ways in which the Mandatory Government's educational policies diverged from those developed in India by Lord Macaulay. Thus in her otherwise excellent book on the Palestinian women's movement, Ellen Flieschmann conflates the two approaches and argues that British officials strove to create a class of upper class civil servants to serve as "interpreters" between the Government and the masses. Such "interpreters" were in fact wholly out of place in a colony under direct rule within which administrators devoted almost all of their meager resources toward maximizing access to primary education. For more on Fleischmann's argument, see Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*: 36-40.

century doctrine of development "along native lines," which argued that an over-emphasis on "literary education" would only lead the natives into revolt.[46] Rather than trying to re-form the natives in the likeness of their British overlords, the emphasis shifted to the preservation of "traditional" structures of authority that could be ruled through indirectly.[47] The gospel of indirect rule was articulated most forcefully by Lord Lugard, the former Governor of Nigeria who held "the education afforded to that section of the population who intend to lead the lives which their forefathers led should enlarge their outlook, increase their efficiency and standard of comfort, and bring them into closer sympathy with the Government, instead of making them unsuited to and ill-contented with their mode of life."[48]

Lord Lugard later served as Britain's representative to the League of Nation's Permanent Mandates Commission and was a member of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, which convened numerous meetings to discuss educational affairs in Palestine. Education administrators in Palestine were therefore well acquainted with Lugard's approach and elaborated on it in several key ways. For instance, in a speech before the Royal Central Asian Society soon after his retirement, Humphey Bowman acknowledged the wariness toward native education that had hardened into downright cynicism:

> There are those who say: 'Why teach the agriculturalist at all? You will only spoil him, make him discontented with his lot, and turn him into an agitator.' These critics may speak the truth if the schooling provided is of the wrong kind. But if it is of the right kind you will make the peasant more, not less, contented; you will save him from his eternal enemy, the moneylender; and

[46] Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law: its connection with the early history of society and its relation to modern ideas* (London: J. Murray, 1887).
[47] Frederick John Dealtry Baron Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, [5th ed. (London] F. Cass, 1965).
[48] Ibid., 425-6.

> you will give him a new pride—a pride in himself and in his village. And you will keep him on the land.[49]

While the first lines of this quote seem to legitimize restricted access to education so that the native agriculturalist is not "spoiled" as a result, Bowman continues to offer a different solution that nonetheless fulfills the same political function of keeping the peasant on the land. He argued that education on a rural, agricultural bias—i.e. the right type of schooling—was crucially important to maintaining the structure of "traditional" society and preventing the dreaded rural drift to urban areas. This was explicitly opposed to the old way of doing things "in both Egypt and India" where "we had colleges and universities before rural schools; in both education began at the wrong end."[50] Thus it is no surprise that the Department of Education privileged primary education at the expense of secondary schooling in Palestine and that the institution charged with training primary school teachers offered the only complete course of public secondary education throughout the Mandate period.

Within colonial and Orientalist circles, Bowman came to be regarded as an education expert who had successfully avoided the pitfalls that undermined his predecessors elsewhere in the Empire. For instance, commenting upon his career in Palestine, the Chairman of the Royal Central Asian Society offered the following words of praise: "Mr. Bowman arrived in Palestine before Lord Macaulay. That is the point. In India it was not really Lord Macaulay but his followers who were at fault; but Mr. Bowman was in Palestine first. Rural minds might have been there first in India, but they were not, and consequently we have a hundred years of leeway to

[49] Bowman, "Rural Education in the Near and Middle East," 402-03.
[50] Ibid.

make up. The minds of people are imbued with the idea that what you have to do is to be a white-collared clerk."[51]

Bowman was precisely the type of "rural mind" that should have been in India, but unfortunately was not. He offered an alternative vision that neither promoted the potentially destabilizing "literary education" nor fell into the cynicism that advocated restricting access to education to all but the most gifted. Instead, he argued that something new was required to maintain the old, that only through the proper type of modern education could traditional life remain viable. To better illustrate this point, it is worth quoting at length Bowman's description of his visit to an idyllic rural school in southern Palestine:

> I would invite you to visit with me in imagination a model rural school in the wild hill-country of Southern Palestine…The villagers, who are all cultivators, paid themselves for the greater part of it, with some help from the Government. The buildings are divided into three sections: one for classroom work, one for carpentry, ironwork, and boot-making, and one for weaving....
>
> Below the buildings, which command a magnificent view over the surrounding country, and from which the Mediterranean can be seen fifty kilometers away, is the garden, where vegetables, flowers and fruit-trees grow, well watered by immigration from a cistern. Goats are kept out by a stone wall. Poultry and rabbits of various kinds are kept, while bees provide the best honey I have ever tasted.
>
> The time of the boys is divided between lessons in the classroom and practical work in the garden or the workshops. One of the older boys is responsible for the cleanliness and the feeding of the poultry, another for that of the rabbits, a third looks after the beehives. Others are engaged in the cultivation of the garden, the pruning of fruit-trees, or the irrigation of plants. There is a radio in the teachers' room, and the clock, which is regulated daily by wireless, gives the correct time to the village.[52]

[51] Ibid., 411.
[52] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 235.

Bowman's rural school has all the features of an ideal type: it was built by empowered villagers with little government help; it introduces the child into modern agricultural practices and teaches them to tend a range of domestic animals, who presumably produced the best meat and eggs alongside the sweetest of honey. And finally, a clock regulated daily ensures that villagers conduct their lives according to "correct time." As such, the school was to serve as a modernizing agent that would transform every element of village life through the production of hygienic, literate and above all efficient children.

The village teacher played a central role in the Department of Education's rural improvement scheme. Bowman often stressed that the village teacher's duties extended far beyond the school itself to tasks like adult education, agricultural demonstrations and disease prevention. In his lecture before the Royal Central Asian Society, he described the headmaster of the model school as "a Moselm Arab wearing native dress, trained in agriculture and in several crafts, an excellent teacher, though without a word of English, an enlightened, loyal and devoted servant of his village and of his country." He was a man of the village, still cloaked in the familiar garb of tradition—signified here by the markers of Islam, the Arabic language and agricultural knowledge—but nonetheless bearing all the tools necessary to rationalize the economic basis of rural life. It was the latter skillset that most distinguished this teacher from his predecessor in the *kuttāb*, who did not

dispense any "practical" instruction and whose pedagogical standards remained "rather low."[53] Thus, Bowman continued:

> With village welfare as a primary duty of the teacher, the enthusiasm will spread to all who dwell there, and conditions will be so changed as to make life not only bearable, but enviable. Improved cultivation will increase prosperity; malaria and eye disease will diminish and gradually disappear; infant mortality will decrease; literacy will spread; the burden of debt will vanish. Livelihood and contentment will take the place of poverty and misery; the peasant, instead of being lethargic and despairing, will become active and hopeful.[54]

Within the context of mobilizing the new to preserve the old, religious education—albeit of a reformed variety—formed essential part of village education. In rural schools, religious instruction commanded between 17-23% of the total school hours, topped only by Arabic.[55] In contrast to schools in urban areas, which devoted scarcely any attention to religious instruction,[56] rural schools were anchored by subjects that were commonly found in the *katātīb* they were meant to replace: namely, the Qur'an, Arabic, and basic arithmetic. This is perhaps not surprising given that many rural public schools were in fact former *katātīb* that were absorbed into the Arab Public System through the extension of grants-in-aid during the early years of the Mandate.[57] Even with the growth in public schooling, the number of *katātīb* actually increased throughout the Mandate period to peak

---

[53] To quote the standard description of *katātīb* found within the Department of Education's Annual Reports, "A considerable number of Kuttabs exist all over the country. In these the Quran, reading and writing are taught. The standard in most remains rather low." This sentence was repeated verbatim in most of the annual reports issued. For example, Department of Education, Government of Palestine*, Annual Report 1925-26.* 14.

[54] Bowman, "Rural Education in the Near and Middle East," 407.

[55] In rural schools, "Religion and Reading of Koran" was allotted 6 hours in the first year, 7 in the second and 9 in the third (out of 34, 39, and 39 total hours, respectively). Arabic was given 12 hours in the first and second classes and 11 hours in the third. See Totah, "Education in Palestine," 157.

[56] Town schools allocated 3 hours to "Religion" in the 2nd year and only 1 hour (of 29-33 total hours) for the 3rd through 6th classes. Ibid., 158.

[57] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 27.

during the 1940-41 school year at 191. By the end of the Mandate, over 14,000 pupils were still educated in 131 private *katātīb,* the relative decline in their number (from 191 in 1940-41) can be partially explained by the expansion of public schooling over the same period (from 402 to 478 schools), "as some of the private schools were taken over by the government."[58] The government's reliance on the absorption of these schools into the Arab public system as part of school expansion programs suggests that the total availability of educational opportunities was even smaller than usually appreciated as many "new" schools were actually pre-existing *katātīb*.

One way of attempting to distinguish the new rural school from the *kuttāb* was through the introduction subjects such as nature study, physical training, "hand work" and agricultural instruction. Such "new" subjects in fact represented the professionalization of everyday rural activities, so that farming, raising poultry—or in the case of girls, children[59]—were transformed into forms of knowledge that were only acquired by removing the child from the home in which they were usually learned.[60] This is no doubt why Humphrey Bowman insisted that the village school be physically separated from the village it was meant to serve, "away from the dust, noise and (may I add?) smells, which are invariable concomitants to the Eastern

[58] Government of Palestine Department of Education. *Annual Report,* 1940-41 and 1945-46.
[59] Ela Greenberg's excellent study of the girls' schools maintained by the Supreme Muslim Council notes a similar proclivity by the SMC to gear female education around motherhood and "domestic science". Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine*.
[60] Ellen Fleischmann points out that it was "rather odd" to teach subjects like gardening and poultry-keeping in the Rural Teachers College given that "most village women learned such skills from their mothers or mothers-in-law without the need for special schooling." Fleischmann, *The Nation and its "New" Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*: 40.

village."[61] In sum, we might say that only by shielding the next generation from traditional modes of rural life could "tradition" be saved in Palestine.

Additionally, due to the shortage of trained teachers, village *imams* were known to maintain their posts even after such schools became part of the Arab Public System. The example of Hassan al-Siba'i, for instance, sheds light on the pragmatic compromises that the Department of Education made as a result of the teacher shortage. He had no formal training as a teacher, but was rather a village imam and *kuttāb* teacher in Majd al-Kurum prior to the Mandate period. His application for employment indicated he was able to teach Islamic religious instruction, Arabic, History, Geography, Hygiene, Writing, Nature, and Physical education,[62] though inspection reports were lukewarm at best. Inspectors noted that he was hardworking, energetic and respected in the village, but described his teaching methods as at best "fair" and at worst "primitive." One report, from January 1926, made note of his limited knowledge but suggested he was fit to retain his post in "a simple village school."[63] He was urged to sit for the Teachers' Licensing Certificate exam, which he failed twice, meaning he remained an "unclassified" (i.e. uncertified) teacher throughout most of his tenure.

However, by the late 1920s, inspectors began to lose patience with Hassan al-Siba'i. Writing in February 1928, the district inspector wrote, "This teacher is not fit to be retained in the service. He has very limited knowledge and a very primitive

[61] Bowman, "Rural Education in the Near and Middle East," 403.
[62] See Hasan al-Siba'i application for employment, October 24, 1922. CZA J17\7295 No. 96/2.
[63] Inspection report for Sh. Hasan Seba'i. January 1, 1926. CZA J17\7295 No. 16.

method. His school has never been found progressing."[64] Still employed in his post in July 1930, the inspector lamented, "His work is not so much satisfactory." The report continued by stating that, if he did not show improvement by the next term, "he should be discharged from the service."[65] The next term arrived, during which al-Siba'i assumed a new post in the Tarbikha village school. Inspectors remained underwhelmed by his performance, again denouncing his method of teaching as "primitive" and noting he "had to be reprimanded for very bad work in arithmetic in 2nd class and for bad work in history in all classes." The inspection reports for the following two years observed that he "has not yet shown the desired improvement in his work" and that "his appointment should be terminated unless he shows improvement."[66] However, it does not seem that he was fired from his post, merely transferred back to his old position at the Majd al-Kurum village school in 1933.

He retained this position until 1938, when he was transferred to the Ja'uneh village school in the district of Sefad. Here his performance improved, at least according to the headmaster of the school, who continually praised his method of teaching as *hasana wa ja'ida* (good).[67] However this was not an assessment with which the government inspector could agree. In a sternly worded letter to the school's headmaster, dated October 30, 1943, he wrote as follows:

> The teaching situation in your school during its inspection on October 20, 1943 was not satisfactory in some of the lessons and classes that were observed, and in particular the students in the fourth class are weak in multiplication and long division, while the students in the third class are

[64] Inspection report for Hassan Siba'i. February 2, 1928. CZA J17\7295.
[65] Inspection report for Hassan Saba'i. July 15, 1930. CZA J17\7295. No. 45.
[66] Inspection reports for Hassan Saba'i. CZA J 17\7295. Nos. 54, 67. The documents are undated, but judging on the other papers in the series, they most likely date from 1931-32.
[67] See, for example, "Confidential Report on Teachers" (in Arabic). May 29, 1944, May 29, 1945 and June 19, 1949. CZA J17\7295.

> weak in geography, subtraction, dictation and writing and their notebooks are filthy and unorganized. Students in the second class are weak in spelling, writing, subtraction and geography and they memorize their lessons by heart without understanding. I therefore demand you and your assistant Mr. Hassan al-Saba'i devote greater effort to raising the level of the school.[68]

Subsequent reports showed more promise, and in March 1947, the Department of Education finally agreed to promote Hassan to the position of classified teacher.[69]

A number of points surface from these documents. First, they demonstrate that not every teacher corresponded to Bowman's ideal described above, but that these teachers were nevertheless retained, transferred to different schools and even promoted. Hassan al-Siba'i served the Department of Education for twenty-five years despite his lukewarm performance and repeated recommendations that he be dismissed. Moreover, the reports gesture at certain traces of his former life as a *kuttāb* teacher, who "does not use the necessary apparatus for illustrations sufficiently," "does not take sufficient care of letters received by…as instructed by the Department," and "relies on memory work."[70] Thus while the Department of Education clearly intended rural schools to differ in substantive ways from the *katātīb* they replaced, in practice certain vestiges of the "old" style inevitably survived in teachers like Hassan al-Siba'i.

In concluding this brief discussion of rural schooling, I think it is productive to suggest a few general comments that stem from the previous analysis. Modernity functioned in this particular case as a series of methods and administrative practices

---

[68] Education inspector to Headmaster of the Ja'uneh school, Sefad. "Subject: the teaching situation in your school (*al-hala al-'almiya fi medresatikum*)" October 30, 1943. CZA J17\7295 No. 192. My translation.
[69] Director of Education to Chief Secretary, "Appointments – Hasan Eff. Siba'i", March 25, 1947. CZA J17\7295 No. 228.
[70] See "Confidential Report on Teachers" from January 1, 1926, July 15, 1930, and September 4, 1944. CZA J17\7295.

that were crucial components of ensuring the preservation of "traditional" life. Thus it was only through access to modern agricultural training and courses on "housewifery" that young boys and girls could battle the misery, poverty and disease that fueled rural migration to the cities. In short, we might say that modernity was required to make traditional life bearable and thus represented the sole hope for its continuity.

This tradition, as we are no doubt familiar, had the tendency to crystalize into less dynamic forms amid the state's attempts to classify, codify and govern through it. Post-colonial scholars who have analyzed this turn to tradition have often characterized it as part of a larger transition in British colonial policy away from liberal attempts to remake the native toward a conservative project that created absolute boundaries between the colonizer and colonized. There is no doubt much to be said in support of such a diagnosis, and yet, at least with regard to education policies in Palestine, this explanation falls a bit short. On the most basic level, it fails to capture the extent to which the respect for "tradition" was self-consciously understood as a progressive departure from colonial norms, that is, as doing something undeniably new that was justified not merely on political grounds, but through arguments about pedagogic and psychological necessity. Of equal importance, such an explanation does not account for the dynamic interplay between the "old" and "new" that characterized the attempt to transform religious schools. The latter half of this project will explore these arguments in greater detail.

Separate but Equal? Educational Separatism and the Mandate Government

Having reviewed the principles upon which educational planning was based in government Arab schools, we must account for how administrators related to the second public system, namely that maintained by the Zionist Organization.[71] Here I will explore and ultimately question the traditional narrative of Jewish and Arab separatism, which generally assumes that the British inherited a divided educational landscape from the Ottomans and did little to change it. My attempt to complicate this narrative should not be confused with an argument that Jewish and Arab schools were not distinct entities during Ottoman times or that the divisions between them were merely colonial creations. My argument is rather that the *form* that this separation assumed changed drastically under the Mandatory government as a result of distinct policies pursued by that government. I will suggest that by overlooking this key fact, we fail to register the extent to which the wholesale separation of Arab from Jew was linked to practices that only developed in the context of British sectarian rule.

In particular, the elevation of a separate system of schools supervised by the Zionist Organization/Va'ad Leumi to the same status as those maintained by the Department of Education legitimized a view of Palestine divided into two distinct public spaces, each with its own language, administrative system and official status. This, I believe, represented a radical departure from the nature of educational separatism under the Ottoman Empire, where numerous private realms surrounded and interacted with the recognized public space rather than attempting to usurp it.

[71] The Zionist school system was administered first by the Zionist Executive/Jewish Agency for Palestine and, beginning in 1932, by the Education Department of the Va'ad Leumi.

Additionally, I will demonstrate how the Mandate Government's policies related to educational financing solidified the boundaries between Arab and Jewish school systems and created administrative hurdles that made any alternative arrangement difficult to envision and nearly impossible to achieve. I will conclude this section with an analysis of the government's promotion of monolingual education and the unforeseen (though in hindsight, nearly inevitable) social implications of this policy.

No educational issue caused greater strain between the Zionist Organization and the Mandate Government than the notorious formula used to distribute public funds between Jewish and Arab schools, or the "Hebrew and Arab Public Systems" as they became known. To understand the formula's complicated history, it is necessary to return to the early days of British rule. Offered the prospect of being absorbed into the government public school system, with the corresponding level of oversight, the Zionist Executive opted to safeguard its educational autonomy by forgoing government funding.[72] When faced with a severe budgetary crisis during the mid-1920s, Zionist leaders appealed to the government for a larger share of funding in proportion to the Jewish community's percentage of the total population. The issue reached the Permanent Mandates Commission in 1925, and in response H.M.G. stated that it was "unable to accept the contention that the Palestine government are under any obligation to ensure that in any head of expenditure of the Palestine Estimates the amount of money devoted to the needs and services of a particular part of the people in Palestine should be proportionate to the size of that

[72] Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: 134.

part."[73] The Permanent Mandates Commission deemed this response adequate, but the Zionist Organization continued to press for a greater measure of government support.

It found a friend in Lord Plumer (High Commissioner 1925-1928), who in 1927 wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies requesting to rectify a "long-standing grievance" of the Zionist Organization, namely "that it has not hitherto received benefit from Government expenditures on Education commensurate with its size and importance." Until this point, the Zionist school system received the same per capita grant for which all private schools were eligible. Plumer argued that it was improper to treat Zionist schools as private institutions, as they in fact represented a parallel public system. He echoed the opinion of officials in the Department of Education in arguing that it was impossible for Jewish students to attend government public schools because the latter employed Arabic as the language of instruction. The conclusion, supported by a committee formed to investigate the matter, was as follows:

> …the Arabic system of schools established by the Government and the Hebrew system supported by the Zionist Organization should be promoted along parallel lines and entitled to receive proportional assistance from public funds, whether from general revenue or local rates. A new Education Ordinance to make legal provision for the practical application of these conclusions has been drafted and will be submitted to you at an early date.[74]

Plumer was anxious to satisfy Zionist demands and proposed that the Government provide an annual grant "proportionate to their numerical strength" to the Zionist school system. Given that "the proportion at present between the Hebrew and

[73] T.I.K. Lloyd, untitled memo, May 7, 1927. TNA, CO 733/139/5.
[74] Lord Plumer to Secretary of State for the Colonies Amery, April 14, 1927. TNA, CO 733/139/5.

Arabic sections of the population is one to five," he proposed granting the Zionist schools LP 20,000 annually, approximately one-fifth of the sum spent on Arab education after shared administrative expenses were deducted.[75]

Lord Plumer's letter introduced into the realm of policy-making a number of assumptions that had never before received official sanction, and indeed, that had been previously contested. The first was that the system of schools maintained by the Zionist Organization for the exclusive use of Palestinian Jews should be regarded as a public institution on par with that maintained by the government itself. Up until the establishment of the grant-in-aid in 1927, Zionist schools were regarded as private institutions. Much to the chagrin of the Zionist Organization, this gave its schools the same status as those funded and supervised by ecclesiastical, missionary or philanthropic organizations that were eligible for a small per capita grant from government funds so long as they met basic sanitary and curricular standards.[76] The decision to institute an annual block grant to the Zionist school system went hand in hand with the recognition of such schools as public entities.

Officials in the Colonial Office questioned how Lord Plumer had come to the conclusion that "the Arabic system of schools established by the Government and the Hebrew system supported by the Zionist Organization was 'entitled to receive

[75] Ibid.

[76] Tibawi argues that the Department of Education could have exercised far more control over private schools under the pretext of maintaining *status quo ante bellum*. The Ottoman Education Act of 1913 held that private institutions were subject to inspection in matters including "hygiene and sanitary conditions, education (*tarbiya*) and instruction (*tadris*), religion and conduct and whether there was any teaching that violated the Ottoman constitution" or disseminated ideas "likely to cause dissention among Ottoman subjects. Ibid. pp. 131. Though this was true in theory, in practice, the Ottoman administration never exercised the full range of these powers with regard to non-government schools. Chapter Three of this study explores this question in greater detail.

proportional assistance from public funds'."[77] Nevertheless, such recognition was granted. The 1927-28 Department of Education Annual Report reflects this change, by making reference to "the Zionist Public School System." Soon after, the term "Hebrew Public System" was adopted, and in 1933, the Education Ordinance formally recognized the schools maintained by the Va'ad Leumi (the communal assembly of Zionist Jews in Palestine) as non-government public schools that were also cross-classified as community schools.[78]

Lord Plumer supported his position by arguing that language marked an unbridgeable gap between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, a point augmented by educational administrators' insistence that it was pedagogically unsound to employ a foreign language as the language of instruction. The refusal to operate mixed schools on the basis that children must be educated in their native tongue, even at the secondary level, represented a novel argument in colonial circles. The facts that Hebrew itself was a foreign language to most Zionist immigrants and their children, or that the native language of many Jews in Palestine was Arabic or Yiddish, did not seem to complicate the ease with which "Hebrew" became a moniker for Jew.

Additionally, neither the officials in Palestine nor those in the Colonial Office drew any attention to the difficulties raised by equating the total Jewish population—on which basis the block grant was calculated—with the Zionist Organization, which would receive the entire sum. The theoretical eliding between Zionist and Jew was widespread; however, it is hard to comprehend how officials

[77] E.J. Harding minute, May 13, 1927. TNA, CO 733/139/5.
[78] Government of Palestine, Education Ordinance, 1933. The cross-classification of Zionist schools as community schools made them eligible for a portion of rates collected by Local Education Authorities. See Chapter Three of this study for an extended analysis.

overcame the practical difficulties this conflation generated at a time when one-third of Jewish children did not attend Zionist schools.[79] Yet overcome it they did, much to the chagrin of Orthodox parties that refused to participate in the Va'ad Leumi and thus sacrificed their share of the educational pie.

These difficulties, both theoretical and practical, were just some of the numerous complications that the division of funding on an enthno-linguistic basis entailed. In their discussion of Lord Plumer's request, members of the Colonial Office expressed their dismay at how far afield such calculations were from the principles on which state services should be based. In a minute "that raises an important issue of principle," T.I.K. Lloyd of the Colonial Office summarized the problem as follows:

> The Jews have shown little desire to enter Government schools, or hospitals, or to comply with the conditions on which Government grants are made to private schools, with the result that the expenditure of the Palestine Government on social services generally, and perhaps educational services in particular, has hitherto been mainly for the benefit of the Arabs…. Lord Plumer now proposes a further increase to the grant bringing it to LP 20,000 per anum, i.e., an amount which bears the same proportion to other Government expenditures on education (after deducting administrative charges) as the Jewish population bears to the remainder of the population of Palestine.[80]

Lloyd opposed Lord Plumer's proposal for two reasons. The first was that the increased grant represented an additional expense at a time of budget shortfalls, making it "urgently necessary to restrict recurrent expenditure of all sorts." But more importantly, he reiterated the objection British officials voiced before the Permanent Mandates Commission in 1925. "If expenditure on education is to be apportioned between Jews and Arabs," Lloyd asked, "why should not expenditure on

[79] Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1927-28*, Appendix A.
[80] T.I.K Lloyd, untitled memorandum, July 1927. TNA, CO 733/139/5.

health, on police and on other Departments be similarly apportioned? Police expenditure, on the other hand, is incurred for the protection of the Jewish community out of all proportion to their numbers and the Zionist executive would be the first to object if the Palestine Government decided to reduce police expenditure in mixed population areas to what one may call 'a proportionate basis'."[81]

He concluded by stating that while an increased grant to the Zionist schools might be desirable for political reasons, "the contention cannot be accepted that the Palestine Government are under any obligation to apportion between Jews and Arabs, according to their population, Government expenditure on education or on any other service," adding that "this point of view was accepted by the Mandates Commission and the Council of the League of Nations at the end of 1925."[82] The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Amery, advised the Colonial Office to draft a reply agreeing to the increased grant-in-aid without offering a position on the principle of proportionality. He only stated that he "should prefer to abstain from comment on the principles laid down in Lord Plumer's dispatch until I receive the proposals of the Palestine Government with regard to education."[83]

The Colonial Office's silence on this question of principle was interpreted by all parties as tacit consent. After many years of administering the LP 20,000 block grant, clearly based on the population ratio of Jews to Arabs, officials found themselves committed to the policy of proportionate funding. Thus in 1932-33,

[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] L.S. Amery minute, June 1, 1927. TNA, CO 733/139/5.

when the time arrived to adjust the grant-in-aid in light of the increase in Jewish population, the Colonial Office wrote to the Treasury for approval of the additional expenditure. In describing the 1927 debates regarding the existing grant-in-aid, they wrote "the principle of calculating the grant on a population basis was not at the time explicitly admitted, but this has since been publicly stated (at Geneva and elsewhere) to be the practice, and the principle could hardly be repudiated, even if it if should appear to lack justification."[84]

For their part, the Zionist Organization repeatedly insisted that the grant-in-aid should not be based on proportionality, but on the number of Jews as a percentage of children enrolled in school.[85] Due to the widespread system of Zionist education—funded in large part by the Zionist Organization and donors abroad—and the fact that public schooling was only available to a minority of Palestinian Arabs, a formula calculated on this basis would have entitled Zionist schools to claim approximately 42% of the education budget at a time when Jews represented less than 20% of the population.[86] The Mandate government rejected this proposal, and used instead the Jewish percentage of the total school-aged population, thereby accounting for the thousands of Arab children for whom no educational services were yet provided. Finally, the Treasurer suggested "an ingenious, but very complicated scheme" based on "the extent of the potential liability for Government for Jewish schools if private funds for the maintenance of such schools were not

[84] "CO attachment to letter to Treasury," January 30, 1933. TNA, CO 733/224/11.
[85] Haim Arlosoroff to High Commissioner Wauchope, February 2, 1932. TNA, CO 733/224/11.
[86] For the 1927-28 school year, estimates were that there were 28,844 Jewish children enrolled in schools (Zionist and non), versus 39,739 Arab children. Department of Education *Annual Report 1927-28*. Table 24.

available."[87] The amount of the grant was therefore fixed at the amount that the state would incur if it educated the same percentage of the Jewish population as it did the Arab, and at the same price per pupil.

Confusion stemming from the legal status of Zionist schools and their access to government financing reflected a larger set of questions regarding who exactly constituted the public. The Zionist Organization could legitimately claim to be administering a public school system so long as its view of the "the public" did not extend beyond the boundary of the Jewish community. Within this zone, it desired universal and compulsory education under strong centralized control, funded by tax revenue distributed on a progressive basis. Zionist officials admitted as much in conversations with the Colonial Office during which they expressed anxiety that groups dissatisfied with the Va'ad Leumi's administration might found their own schools, effectively meaning that "the more wealthy section of a Jewish community might object to paying for the education of the poorer sections."[88]

However when it came to Palestine as a whole, the Zionist Organization repeatedly demanded that revenue derived from Jewish taxation only be used to fund Jewish education, a request that was met by the Colonial Office and incorporated into the Education Ordinance of 1933. The Ordinance therefore allowed for the creation of local education sub-committees, in lieu of a unified authority, in areas with a mixed population and stipulated that "school fees collected by any Sub-Committee…shall be expended only upon the schools controlled by that

[87] Colonial Office memorandum, December 12, 1932. TNA, CO 733/224/11.
[88] Meeting minutes with Brodetsky, 1932. TNA, CO 733/222/1

Sub-Committee."[89] Thus with regard to the internal world of the Jewish community, the Zionist Organization jealously guarded the principles of universal access to education and progressive taxation to finance it; externally, it rejected both premises.

Lurking behind this rejection was, of course, the unwillingness to see the Palestinian Arab as a fellow citizen. This feeling was of course not exclusive to the Zionist community, but rather the flip-side found widespread acceptance in Arab circles as communal boundaries hardened into political ones. However the lack of any Arab parallel to the Jewish Agency meant that such objections never received the same level of official attention as those voiced by the Zionist Organization. Given the political climate of the period and the asymmetric recognition of national rights upon which the Mandate was based, it is hard to see how the situation could have been otherwise. Yet, as Michelle Campos has recently shown in her study of the Ottoman constitutional period, it would be wrong to assume that this was the natural or inevitable state of affairs stemming from the reality of multiple ethno-religious groups inhabiting a single territory. Separatism had to be produced at numerous levels—politically, socially, commercially and educationally and legally. The following discussion will provide a more detailed example of how this was done.

[89] Government of Palestine, "Education Ordinance, 1933." Regulations by the High Commissioner under Section 14, number 60.

Monolingualism and the Logic of Separation

"It is no doubt easy to be wise after the event," wrote H.S. Scott of the Colonial Office in November 1944, while commenting on a memorandum by the Director of Education summarizing the "tragic history" of education during the Mandate. "If the purpose of the Mandatory was to establish a composite state one would have thought that unity of treatment in education should have been adopted from the beginning." The danger of allowing separate systems of education to flourish, he continue, was that "the cultural rift between Jews and Arabs, which it was a mandatory obligation to close, would actually be widened and I fear that is exactly what has happened."[90] Scott's comments encapsulate the general lament that swept through much of the Colonial Office during the Mandate's final years. Generally speaking, officials spent the first part of the period arguing that a unified school system was undesirable and the final years lamenting the fact that it was no longer feasible.

Much of the confusion stemmed from the vagueness of the Mandate itself and the differing interpretations as to what political and social reality it entailed. It is telling that in 1944, the Colonial Office could not exactly clarify what the Mandatory's policy had been or should have been. Was the goal, as Scott articulated it, to form a "composite state" with a binational character? Or was Palestine to be a Jewish state with the Arab majority rendered a minority through massive immigration? Was it to have an Arab majority with a large, autonomous Jewish population? The fact that an unambiguous answer to these questions was never

[90] H.S. Scott, "on memorandum by Jerome Farrell." November 3, 1944. TNA, CO 733/453/4.

forthcoming—or that the answer changed with every White Paper—left education administrators without a clear sense of what role schools were to play in shaping the political future.

Moreover, the mere suggestion that policy should be dictated by political, rather than educational, concerns violated the epistemic order on which colonial educators depended to distinguish social engineering from pedagogic necessity. Bearing a deeply idealized understanding of education as an apolitical exercise in character formation, both Bowman and Farrell often failed to understand the very real political implications of what they regarded as educational decisions. Perhaps the best illustration of this self-understanding can be located in discussions of monolingualism, a policy that was both socially conservative in effect and yet justified through an appeal to modern pedagogic research. Importantly for our purposes, the Department of Education's "progressive" support for monolingualism effectively squashed any possibility of mixed Jewish-Arab schooling and thereby accelerated communal trends toward self-segregation and political division.

The Palestine Royal Commission was among the first bodies to openly comment on the lack of any unified sense of public space or shared Palestinian citizenship. The Commission identified the segregated school system as a leading factor that had contributed to the mutual animosity that now rendered separation the prerequisite for any future peace between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. In his testimony before the PRC, Humphrey Bowman agreed with the Commissioners that "one of the duties of the Mandatory is to promote good understanding between the different sections of the population," and that "the educational field would seem on

the surface to afford an opportunity for promoting such good understanding," and yet he could offer no substantive example of actions that had furthered these lofty goals. Rather, he replied that he had not "to any effective extent" been able to apply the educational system to those ends though he had "tried within certain limits."[91]

At the same time that the PRC suggested the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab enclaves, the members also praised the work of a small number of private "mixed schools" and wondered if more could have been done in the past to promote this form of education. It is worth noting that the mixed schools singled out for praise were all Christian missionary establishments, ideally portrayed as safe spaces where Jews and Muslims could abandon their political strife through the acquisition of good universal (i.e. Christian) values. However, and despite these models to the contrary, the Department of Education held that language represented an unbridgeable gap that no school system could overcome. Bowman, for example, spoke of the difficulties involved in fostering a shared educational space as linguistic rather than political in nature. "The language of Arabs is Arabic; the language of the Jews is Hebrew. Both races attach very great importance to the education in elementary schools through their own language. It would be impossible in my opinion to have Arabs and Jews in one school as long as the language difficulty exists and I see no possibility of that language difficulty being solved."[92]

The matter was inevitably complicated by regulations regarding education included in the Mandate for Palestine. In particular, Article 15 guaranteed "the right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its own

[91] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 50.
[92] Ibid.

members in its own language, while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the Administration might impose." British officials, therefore, tended to regard any type of joint schooling as both impractical and as a potential violation of the Mandate. Once set in motion, this logic foreclosed any possibility of a common linguistic space and required escalating levels of administrative compromise to support the bifurcated public sphere. The following exchange between Bowman and the PRC is instructive in this regard:

> (Commissioner): I am rather dismayed to find on looking at the Government papers that the regulations are printed in three languages. That I take it is required by your interpretation of the Mandate?
>
> (Bowman): That is not the real reason. The reason is that the [matriculation] examination can be taken in any of those three languages.
>
> (Commissioner): But why do you permit the examination to be taken in any of the three languages? Is that because you feel the Mandate requires it?
>
> (Bowman): It would be impossible under the present system to arrange an examination in any other way because the language of instruction in the Hebrew secondary schools is Hebrew and in the one complete Government secondary school Arabic.[93]

Thus, the educational structure helped produce an administrative necessity to maintain multiple official languages on a pragmatic (rather than purely symbolic) basis. Palestine therefore had the curious status of being a multi-lingual society not because of its cosmopolitan character, but because each community was only meant to know a single tongue.

Most importantly, both Bowman and his successor, Jerome Farrell, dismissed the possibility of a mixed school system on the basis that it was pedagogically unsound. Echoing contemporary European arguments regarding the harm of

[93] Ibid., 49.

multilingualism to the child's intellectual and psychological development, officials in the Department of Education defended their decision to use Arabic as the sole language of instruction in public schools. Thus when the Royal Commission Report raised the question whether more might be done to foster mixed schooling, Farrell countered that "on purely educational grounds the proposals can hardly be justified. No elementary or secondary pupil whose native language is of literary and cultural value should be encouraged to seek instruction through a foreign medium."[94]

The Department of Education relied on the same defense to justify not opening any English-speaking public schools, particularly at the secondary level, even though the policy of monolingualism represented a departure from educational norms elsewhere. One member of the PRC went as far as to ask Bowman to explain "this exceptional procedure," noting that "in no other territory under British rule…is there a Government maintained secondary school in which the language of instruction is not English."[95] Bowman insisted his reason was "educational", granting it a quasi-scientific pedigree that functioned to remove the issue of language from the highly divisive political context in which it was situated.

What is noteworthy here for our purposes is the attempt to outline a neutral field of pedagogic action that—following the rules of the modern educational constitution—British administrators held apart from political considerations. Yet what makes this case study most fascinating is the way in which colonial educators found allies among both Jewish and Arab leaders, who, however, were quite clear in

[94] Farrell memorandum on "Report of the Royal Commission on Palestine: Recommendations with regard to 'mixed schools' and language instruction." November 20, 1937. TNA, CO 733/362/2.
[95] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936," 48.

linking their respective "native" languages to larger political projects. For Zionists, multilingualism was deeply associated with Diasporic existence, *galutiyut*, and thereby ran counter to the aims of Jewish national "normalization" in Palestine. While never without its points of ambivalence, the Zionist promotion of communal separatism through the exclusive use of Hebrew aimed at "the escape from European Jewish institutional pressures for multilingual education."[96] Within the *yishuv,* leaders such as Menahem Ussishkin argued that "the multiplicity of languages is unnatural" while educators like Izhac Epstein warned of the psychological damages of multilingualism, drawing on the latest in pedagogic research from European countries.[97]

For their part, Palestinian nationalists welcomed the elevation of Arabic as the language of instruction in government public schools, a change effected soon after the British occupation. Within the context of late Ottoman Palestine, imperial decentralists promoted the use of Arabic as an administrative and educational language within regions of the Empire with an Arab majority.[98] Meanwhile, educators and political leaders decried the influence of missionary schools that educated Arab children in foreign languages and supposedly led to estrangement from the national tongue. In 1909 many of these dynamics coalesced in the form of

[96] Liora Halperin, "Babel in Zion: The Politics of Language Diversity in Jewish Palestine, 1920-1948" (UCLA, 2010), 321.
[97] Ibid., 326-29.
[98] The Decentralization Party, *al-muntada al-'arabi*, first emerged after the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 and promoted greater autonomy of the Empire's Arab provinces. In 1913, the First Arab Congress promoted a platform of decentralization within an Ottoman framework, including the use of Arabic as an educational and administrative language. See Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*: 286-89.

Khalil al-Sakakini's famed *Dusturiyya* school, which used Arabic as the language of instruction and included a largely secular curriculum.[99]

In sum, it was not that the British merely failed to support mixed schooling, but that officials never seemed to consider the almost inevitable political consequences of nurturing separate school systems. They saw nothing contradictory about, on one hand, claiming that the policy of the Department of Education was "to lessen the cultural gulf between the two races,"[100] and on the other, facilitating the complete separation of the two groups through segregated, monolingual education. Education may have been a tool for equalizing the "two races" in Palestine, but certainly not for facilitating their integration.

Such a policy had no shortage of ambiguities, but two in particular are worthy of mention. First, support for monolingual education in each community's "native" language was one of the few education policies that earned the unequivocal approval of Palestinian and Zionist nationalist forces, and yet it inevitably contributed to the political and social fragmentation of Palestine into distinct Hebrew and Arabic spaces with limited *capacity* (to say nothing of desire) to communicate with one another. Secondly, the justification for monolingualism largely hinged not on obvious political motivations, but on the needs supposedly dictated by modern pedagogical research and "progressive" colonial administrative tools. As such, the question of language was dislocated from the political realm in

[99] For more on al-Sakakini's educational initiatives, see Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*: 29-32.
[100] Jerome Farrell, "Note on the principles upon which the grant-in-aid of the Jewish public school system should be estimated and applied." January 30th, 1937. TNA, CO 733/346/17.

which it was situated to become a quasi-scientific marker of race with its corresponding educational necessities.

Conclusion

It is necessary to state that upon their occupation of Palestine, the British inherited a fragmented educational system. While they did not create these divisions, I have argued that administrators pursued educational policies that accelerated Jewish and Arab separatism, and furthermore, gave statutory recognition to such separatism so that education *could not* proceed on any other basis. This chapter has called attention to three distinct courses of action that functioned to dramatically alter the form that educational separatism assumed during the Mandate period. Far from representing a continuation from Ottoman times, the educational structure in Mandate Palestine became ever more fragmented due to policies relating to educational funding, the statutory recognition of multiple public school systems, and the unwillingness to tackle challenges presented by multiple languages of instruction. Conflating the nature of Jewish and Arab educational separatism under Ottoman and British rule requires overlooking these developments, and indeed, projects onto the past a social structure that was still in the process of formation.

I have further argued that the Department of Education pursued courses of action that were often at odds, lending a sense of disjointedness to policies. For instance, the policy of "equalization" required a massive expansion of primary education for Arab children, and yet no substantive measures were taken to expand

access to secondary schools in which the majority of teachers were trained. Similarly, while the Department of Education repeatedly noted the strong demand for female education and expressed support for its expansion, it drastically limited the potential pool of female teachers. Moreover, the language of pedagogic responsibility served to mask the political ramifications of decisions that were purportedly based on educational best practices.

The refusal to acknowledging the inherently political nature of mass schooling—to say nothing of the impossibility of insulating schools against the surrounding political drama—also foreclosed any potential to craft an education policy that might serve a positive political role. In this, the British diverged from their Ottoman predecessors, who envisaged the school as a crucial site of acculturation between the various religious and ethnic groups that constituted the Empire.[101] It is true the reality of the Ottoman system fell far short of this lofty goal. However, it is significant that the British did not set such a goal to begin with, and indeed, doing so would have been out of step with their conservative view of education as a force that should preserve the status quo rather than transform it. The irony, of course, was that the Palestinian social reality was being radically transformed all around the schoolhouse. For the Department of Education, however, it was business as usual.

[101] Somel, *The modernization of public education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 : Islamization, autocracy, and discipline*.

Chapter Three

Education and Community under Sectarian Rule

In order to further examine the relationship between religious education and the Mandate's legal structure, this chapter will examine the debates leading up to the promulgation of the Palestine Education Ordinance in 1933. Although the first draft of the Ordinance was published in October 1927, it took six years for administrators in Palestine and officials in the Colonial Office to produce a piece of legislation that appeased its critics, though it still failed to satisfy them.[1] Not only was such legislation much delayed, but it was finally published in 1933 as an emaciated version of its former self, largely due to the difficulties the Government of Palestine encountered in attempting to extend its powers of supervision over those schools maintained by religious bodies. The proposed Ordinance set off a heated discussion about the powers of supervision that should be vested in the Department of Education, the status of religious schools and religious knowledge, the definition and role of local communities, and the conditions under which those communities could attain educational autonomy. As such, these debates gesture at the central role of religion in framing the educational structure of Mandate Palestine, a legal dependence rendered all the more problematic by ambiguities concerning the boundaries of religious knowledge and the nature of religious communities.

[1] In his critique of the Mandatory Government and its education policies, Abdul Latif Tibawi dryly notes dryly that laws regarding antiquities, customs, and cinema censorship were promulgated long before an ordinance relating to education. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*.

In the analysis that follows, I will attempt to unpack the different responses to the legislation by various groups, and the compromises the Mandatory Government made in response. While it is clear that the Ordinance was originally designed to accommodate the privileged position of Catholic and other Christian missionary schools in Palestine, it created legal and administrative structures that had far-reaching implications for religious education as a whole. I argue that British officials dealt with the storm of diplomatic protests by designating religious instruction as a category of exception that was largely exempted from state supervision. As politically expedient as this compromise was, it was only possible due to an understanding of religious education as a conservative force that largely functioned—like modes of "tradition" elsewhere—to augment the social and political status quo. While the exemption of religious education from the Ordinance's provisions may seem to constitute its removal from the political space, it in fact marked an attempt to encourage the "appropriate" form of political organization at the sectarian level. Thus the Ordinance rendered religious organization through a singular and monolithic "community" as the only means through which to attain educational autonomy. Those who opted out of such communities, or those who wished to organize schooling on a non-sectarian basis, were left to support their endeavors without official sanction or government support.

Finally, I will show that the Zionist and Palestinian Arab leaderships were both highly critical of the Ordinance, but that their respective protests revealed drastically different conceptions of sovereignty and the public space. Palestinian

responses to the Ordinance reflected an attempt to increase their participation in the country's educational affairs while still, however reluctantly, recognizing the Mandatory government as the legitimate site of political authority. Those from Zionist leaders, however, advanced a vision of Palestine fragmented into multiple public realms, each with their own corresponding sovereign power. Understanding these key differences tells us a great deal about both the development of education during this period and the emergence of certain dynamics that would subsequently define the larger political conflict.

The Mandate and the Right to Inspect

Upon occupying Palestine, the British assumed direct control of the former Ottoman public schools and nominal control over a plethora of private schools (including those of the Zionist Organization) teaching in no fewer than seven languages and often maintained by political, philanthropic or missionary groups abroad. Supervising such a motley crew was a tall order in and of itself, but it was made even more so by the peculiar terms of the Mandate. Article 15 guaranteed "the right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its own members in its own language, while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the Administration may impose." On the face of it, Article 15 seemed merely to offer statutory recognition to the Ottoman millet system, in which religious minorities maintained a large degree of autonomy in educational affairs. Yet, as Laura Robson has recently argued, rather than simply preserving the millet system as a continuation of the status quo, the Mandatory government actually

expanded its scope and codified it in a legal system that rendered sectarian identity a prerequisite for political participation.[2] We shall see that the attempt to govern Palestine through sectarian units produced consequences that were particularly significant for religious education.

Until the Education Ordinance was finally promulgated in 1933, Ottoman laws were in theory still enforceable. The Ottoman Education Act of 1913 reserved for government the right to supervise the curriculum, teaching staff, hygiene and general administration of all schools in Palestine, be they public or private. In not distinguishing between types of schools, the Ottoman law reflected a view of education as a central concern of the modernizing state. In his critique of British educational policy in Palestine, Abdul Latif Tibawi placed blame upon the British for not exercising closer supervision of private schools as a continuation of this *status quo ante bellum*.[3] However, he overlooked the fact that the Ottomans' control of private educational institutions was in most cases purely nominal.[4] In practice, the Sublime Porte's concessions to European powers often included a pledge not to interfere in the affairs of Christian or Jewish schools. Thus both Christian missionary groups and the Zionist Organization would protest that the Mandatory Government's attempt to supervise their schools represented a drastic departure from the status quo. "It has been said that some of the requirements (e.g. registration of schools) merely maintain the Turkish law," the Latin Patriarch wrote

[2] Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*.
[3] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 134-35.
[4] It is telling that in her extended account of Hebrew education in Ottoman Palestine, Rachel Elboim Dror has little to say about the Ottoman government. The chapter on the crucial years 1912-13, when the Ottoman education act was promulgated, is wholly devoted to the conflicts *within* the Jewish community. Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*.

to the Colonial Office in response to the proposed regulations. "The fact is shown… that the Porte has granted many privileges, and what are privileges, if not suspensions from the law?"[5]

The laissez-faire approach to supervision of private schools provided a sharp contrast with that of public schools, over which the Director of Education assumed complete control. "If the English reader can imagine one single person who combines the powers and functions of Parliament, the Minister of Education, the local education authorities and the National Union of Teachers, he will have an approximate picture of the powers and functions of the Director of Education in Palestine."[6] An Assistant Director and two groups of school inspectors, for the Arab and Hebrew public systems, respectively, rounded out the Department of Education's staff. The inspectorate included a number of noteworthy figures, including Sheikh Hussam al-Din Jarallah—who was chosen by the *'ulema* of Palestine to assume the title of Grand Mufti before the British appointed Haj Amin al-Husseini[7]—and the future scholars Abdul Latif Tibawi, Joseph Bentwich and Shlomo Dov Goitein.

Palestinian nationalists frequently criticized the Department of Education for maintaining almost total control of public education. Here, the case of Palestine offered a striking contrast with other Class A Mandates in which education was

[5] Louis Barlassina to Colonial Office, August 16, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[6] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 30.
[7] See "Hassam al-Din Jarallah" in Muhammad 'Amr Hamada, *A'lām filasṭīn min al-qurn al-awal hata al-khāmis 'ashar* (Damascus: Dar Qutaybah, 1985), 133-34. On the elections to chose the Grand Mufti, see: Bayan Nuwayhed Al-Hout, *al-qiyādāt wa al-mu'assassāt al-siyāsiya fi filasṭīn 1917-1948*, 3 ed. (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986), 203-05.

among the first portfolios handed over to local leaders.[8] Moreover, nationalists claimed that the centralization of control in the hands of the Directorate actually overturned the status quo by eliminating the active participation of local education councils that helped manage Ottoman public schools. The Palestinian educator Khalil Totah, famously gave voice to this complaint in his testimony before the Palestine Royal Commission in 1936. "The major grievance of the Arabs as regards education, is that they have no control over it," he stated. "It would seem that Arab education is either designed to reconcile the Arabs to this policy [of creating a Jewish national home] or to make that education so colourless as to make it harmless and not endanger the carrying out of that policy."[9]

Local Education Authorities did exist, and indeed, the need to decentralize school *funding* helped fuel the creation of such councils. Yet their role was strictly limited to providing supplementary financing for schools in each municipality or district. As I addressed in the previous chapter, anxiety over educational financing led the Government of Palestine to recommend an arrangement whereby villages that desired schools would be responsible for providing the building and furnishings, while the Government would pay the teacher's salary and other annual expenditures. "Afterwards," Bowman stated, "there might be a measure of decentralization, both of finance and control." He "felt sure that the members of the

[8] For an account of education in Mandate Syria, see: Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: the politics of Arab nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Jennifer Dueck, *The Claims of Culture at Empire's End* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 51-90. For a discussion of British educational policy in Mandate Iraq, see: Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 273-91. Orit Bashkin, ""When Mu'awiya Entered the Curriculum" - Some Comments on the Iraqi Education System in the Interwar Period," in *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths*, ed. Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[9] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 131-33.

[Advisory] Council would agree with him that the more education was decentralized the more likely it is to succeed and the greater the interest the inhabitants will take in it."[10]

It was against this backdrop that Humphrey Bowman, along with the new High Commissioner, Lord Plumer, drafted Palestine's first Education Ordinance. The legislation would transfer part of the burden of educational financing from central funds to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) established at the municipal level. In many ways LEAs in Palestine resembled those in Great Britain itself, with the crucial exception that they were granted financial responsibility without any corresponding measure of administrative control. This selective nature of educational decentralization did not escape the notice of the municipalities. The Jerusalem council, perhaps one of the few public bodies that included both Jews and Arabs, submitted a memorandum detailing their objections on this front:

> While the Director of Education is empowered to deal with all administrative questions, such as the opening of schools, registration of schools, appointment of teachers, registration and licensing of teachers, determination of their qualifications, closing of schools, rejecting their registration, refusing the applications made for the registration of teachers, inspection of schools, preparation of the syllabus, issue of licenses, cancellation of licenses, examination of candidates for appointment of teachers; while all these powers are vested in the Director of Education, the local education authorities are only executive implements in the hands of the Director in order to meet all the required expenses which cannot be estimated.[11]

Conversely, administrative decentralization of the Zionist system was far more complete. There was of course no Arab Agency with parallel functions and status to those given to the Jewish Agency that could lobby for similar powers of consultation

[10] Second Advisory Council Meeting minutes, November 9, 1920. TNA, CO 814/6-0002.
[11] Jerusalem Municipal Council, Untitled memorandum. August 16, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

in issues affecting Arab schools.[12] As a largely self-financed operation, the "Hebrew Public System" was granted almost complete autonomy. However, self-financed should not be taken to mean supported in its totality by Palestinian Jewry. Particularly during the first decade of the Mandate, most of the financing for the Zionist school system came from the Zionist Organization in London and donations from Jews living abroad. The extension of a large block grant beginning in 1927, tied to the proportion of Jews in the population, in theory subjected the Hebrew Public System to closer government supervision. In practice, the Department of Education never posed a serious threat to the autonomy of Zionist schools; on the contrary, it helped secure it.[13]

Though government administrators were highly critical of the Zionist school system, threats to withhold the block grant if certain reforms were not executed proved to be empty. For instance, writing five years after the grant was initiated, the High Commissioner noted, "though the [Jewish] Agency has expressed its general agreement with the [reform] principles laid down, it has found itself unable to make any substantial progress toward giving effect to them." [14] Yet the grant was never suspended, and conversely, the government soon agreed to act as a guarantor for the Va'ad Leumi when the latter applied for a L.P. 100,000 loan for new school construction.[15] Additionally, while government inspectors attended meetings convened by Zionist education administrators, their recommendations were taken

[12] For a discussion of why an Arab Agency was never created—and never could be within the terms of the Mandate—see Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*: 44-45.
[13] Reshef, *ha-ḫinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 153.
[14] High Commissioner Wauchope to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Secretary of State for the Colonies. April 9, 1932. TNA, CO 733/224/11.
[15] High Commissioner Wauchope to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Secretary of State for the Colonies. April 19, 1935. TNA, CO 733/274/4.

as suggestions rather than demands. A memorandum prepared by the Jewish Agency reflected this attitude, stating, "while the Jewish authorities are prepared to entertain recommendations and proposals on such points from the Government Department of Education, we cannot look upon such recommendations as being mandatory."[16]

The Education Ordinance itself was based on a combination of former Ottoman law and education legislation taken from Great Britain and Nigeria.[17] As I argued in Chapter Two, officials in Palestine were true believers in the Gospel according to Lugard, the former Governor of Nigeria, and aimed to strike a delicate balance between educational progress and social stability. It was hoped that the "right" type of education would halt the flow of peasants to urban centers by rendering modes of "traditional" life less burdensome through increased agricultural productivity and better sanitary conditions.

While Nigeria served as the immediate colonial model for the Palestinian legislation, administrators adopted certain provisions—specifically those relating to religious schools—from Great Britain itself. Provisions regarding the licensing of teachers, inspection of schools, and the role of Local Education Authorities can be traced to England's own education reforms at the turn of the twentieth century, and particularly, to Conservative attempts to strengthen the position of Anglican schools.

---

[16] "Memorandum of the Department of Education of the Jewish Agency on the proposals of the Director of Education regarding reform of the Jewish schools system." Received December 12, 1932. TNA, CO 733/224/11.

[17] Norman Bentwich, "Explanatory Note on the Education Ordinance." May 17, 1927. TNA, CO 733/141/17.

The first draft of the Ordinance was published in October 1927 and gave the Department of Education and its Director complete power of supervision over all schools irrespective of type. This control encompassed matters of curriculum, school syllabi and textbooks, licensing, appointment and dismissal of teachers, registration, opening and closing of schools, health and medical inspections and general oversight to protect against "morally or politically corrupt" teachings. Importantly, the regulations were to be applied to all categories of school without exception, effectively granting the Director of Education the same inspection rights in missionary and Zionist schools as he enjoyed in those maintained by the government.[18]

This was in fact the goal. Humphrey Bowman expressed hope that the Ordinance would provide the legal means for extending government supervision into the realm of private schools, which had previously proved impossible to control. After the first draft of the Ordinance was published in 1927, he noted with satisfaction that the new legislation might provide the statutory basis for such supervision, writing, "it will be a great help with bringing into line the non-government schools."[19] Bowman expected the Ordinance to take effect within months, and in this he greatly underestimated the storm of controversy the draft legislation would generate.

Interestingly, even groups that explicitly opposed the Mandate argued that the proposed legislation was contrary to its terms. Christian and Jewish groups

[18] Government of Palestine, "An Ordinance Relating to Education," in *The Palestine Gazette*. October 16, 1927.
[19] Humphrey Bowman, diary entry dated November 13, 1927. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 3B.

claimed that the Government's attempts to register and inspect their schools violated Article 15. Meanwhile, Palestinian Arabs asserted that Article 15 also guaranteed their rights to educational autonomy and demanded a greater role in the administration of the Arab Public System. I will deal with each of these protests in turn, as the form each assumed tells us a great deal about differing conceptions of governance, community, and the legitimate location of authority within a fragmented political and social space.

The loudest voices of protest came from France, Italy and the Vatican, and were chiefly concerned that the draft Ordinance represented a direct challenge to the autonomy that Catholic schools historically enjoyed. In response, Lord Plumer argued that the educational freedoms granted by Article 15 of the Mandate were tempered by Article 16, which gave the Mandatory supervisory rights over religious or missionary bodies "as may be required for the maintenance of public order and good Government." The High Commissioner held that it was therefore possible to impose requirements on schools maintained by religious bodies "which are educational in nature."[20]

Generally speaking, the High Commissioner and the Director of Education sought to bestow upon the Government of Palestine far greater powers of educational supervision than the Colonial Office—faced with a flurry of complaints—was willing to allow. Part of the dispute stemmed from the fact that administrators had substantial experience in colonial settings and expected similar regulations to be enacted in Palestine. Officials in the Colonial Office, on the other

[20] Lloyd, T.I.K. "Draft Education Ordinance, Etc." November 28, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

hand, were preoccupied by the novelty of a Mandate under international control and unsure of what legal limitations it entailed. Regarding the Education Ordinance, the latter group was unconvinced that the legislation as drafted was consistent with the terms of the Mandate, and noted that "the mere fact that the question is one of interpretation, that the whole subject of education in Palestine is so controversial and that neither the Turkish nor the Palestine governments have in the past interfered in any way with religious schools, clearly makes it desirable to proceed with utmost circumspection."[21]

Officials in London also feared that the Ordinance would create barriers before private educational initiatives, which would consequently place a larger financial burden on the Palestine Government. At the most basic level, the more children were enrolled in Zionist, missionary and other private schools, the more the Government's own responsibility for education would diminish. This perspective was not at all surprising given that Great Britain had left the education of its own population primarily in the hands of the Anglican Church and other private organizations until the end of the nineteenth century.[22] Even by the final years of the Mandate, far more children were educated in Zionist and private religious schools than in the government-run Arab Public System. For the 1925-26 school year, there were a total of 19,737 total students enrolled in the government's public schools, versus 45,071 pupils in private schools (which, at this time, included Zionist ones). 15,145 students were enrolled in Christian schools alone. Twenty

[21] Ibid.
[22] Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children, School, and Society in nineteenth-century England* (London: New York, 1981).

years later, 81,042 students attended Arab public schools, versus 87,287 in the Hebrew Public System, and 64,523 in private schools.[23]

Thus, ever conscious of their dependence on private bodies to supplement state social services, officials in the colonial office deemed certain proposed regulations "badly drafted" and "characteristically meddlesome". In the words of T.I.K. Lloyd, writing in 1928, "to the need for the development/spread of education, which in present financial crisis must be left largely to non-governmental agencies, the regulations as a whole would appear to be far too restrictive in character."[24] Thus while the Government of Palestine initially sought to extend its powers of supervision, the Colonial Office argued that any substantive measure of control would discourage private educational initiatives and thereby undermine the financial strategy for delivering social services.

For their part, Catholic powers found fault with clauses requiring all schools to register and all teachers to be licensed by the Department of Education. They took further issue with the broad powers of inspection given to education officials. In response, the High Commissioner recommended amending the legislation to exempt religious schools from certain clauses. Owing to "apprehension on the part of religious bodies…that the draft gave possibilities of inquisitions by officers not properly qualified to inspect schools," the High Commissioner limited powers of "general inspection" to the Director of Education. He agreed to exempt from the Ordinance schools imparting religious education exclusively and to not interfere

[23] Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1925-26* and *Annual Report 1945-46.*
[24] Lloyd, T.I.K. Untitled minute, July 30, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/7.

with matters of religious curriculum in private schools, even those receiving government aid. Finally he offered assurance that any teacher's license "signed by the Religious Head of the Communion to which the teacher belongs" would be recognized as valid.[25]

An amended draft of the Ordinance was published in July 1928, though critics still found it far from satisfactory. A particularly scathing rebuttal arrived in the form of a 21-page missive from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Louis Barlassina. The Patriarch objected to the draft Ordinance on the basis of prior assurances given by the British Government not to interfere in the affairs of Catholic schools. As a matter of precedent, he wrote, France (acting in its self-appointed role as "Protector of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire") had secured an arrangement with the Sublime Porte "which secured the liberty of teaching in Catholic schools without let or hindrance from the officers of the Ottoman Government." After the war, Great Britain agreed "to recognize all the rights obtained by France from the Ottoman Government, including those of schools." He continued, "Although the Ottoman Law has some regulations and restrictions with regard to private schools, which are found in the Ottoman Code, nevertheless, if on one side the Turkish Government has inserted them as a sign of its authority, on the other it was conscious of the inconvenience of putting them into force."[26]

The Patriarch sought to communicate that any British attempts to supervise Catholic schools would prove equally inconvenient. It is noteworthy that some of the most vociferous responses to the legislation came from Christians, like the

[25] Lord Plumer to Sec. of State Amery, January 12 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/7.
[26] Louis Barlassina to Colonial Office, August 16, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

Patriarch, who displayed no greater enthusiasm for British rulers than he did for the former Ottoman variety. Furthermore, he argued that by adopting legislation from colonial settings, the Mandate government's laws were actually far more meddlesome than any he had faced in the past. "Palestine is not a COLONY and cannot be treated as such," he stated with characteristic frankness.[27] The Patriarch offered the domestic British model in place of a colonial one and proposed that private schools in Palestine should be given the complete autonomy they enjoyed in England, where they operated unregistered and did not submit to government inspections.

With a few minor exceptions, Barlassina's protest did not involve matters of curriculum, which was assumed to be beyond the pale of any proposed legislation. Rather, the majority of his objections concern the regulatory machinery the Ordinance attempted to enact as a means of gaining visibility into private educational spaces. Though the Palestine government did not attempt to dictate what could be taught in schools maintained by religious orders, the draft Ordinance stipulated under what conditions schools could open or continue to operate and thus affected their capacity to teach at all. Barlassina regarded these regulations, cloaked in the language of public order and sanitation, as of equal danger as those that would have interfered in curricular matters. Here a telling example from the Patriarch's letter is worth quoting at length:

> For some years past the Education Department has been trying to enroll all the Catholic Educational institutions under its control…I myself, repeatedly spoke to Mr. Bowman, Mr. Farrell, and Mr. Antonius on the subject, declaring that we could not accept either the imposition of filling up, every three

[27] Ibid.

> months, their complicated Attendance Return forms or the many other innovations contained in circular letters issued from time to time. Nevertheless I expressed our willingness, if only as a matter of courtesy, to furnish yearly to the Education Department such information and statistics, of not too complicated a nature, as might be useful…Notwithstanding, the Education Department continued, every three months, to harass the Communities who were urged to fill up these forms. Eventually seeing that this was a loss of time…the Department of Education began to use other means which, to say the least, were by no means delicate.[28]

Forms were sent to directly to parish priests living in villages, many of whom complied and returned them out of fear, though most appealed to the Patriarch for instructions. In Barlassina's eyes, the act of addressing the priests directly represented a direct challenge to the hierarchical structure of the clergy, and thus implicitly, to his status as mediator between the government and the masses. "Allow me, Sir," he wrote, "to ask whether it encourages discipline to be respected, to urge subjects to do a thing which is known to be formally refused by their superiors."

Unable to secure the Patriarch's cooperation, he claimed that the Department of Education turned to the Consuls, "hoping to obtain from them what the Communities had refused up to that time through me." He continued:

> A letter…was sent to the Consuls. The subject of the letter was that of the Customs Exemption but attached was the "FORM OF APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO OPEN A SCHOOL", and the Consuls were invited to cause the same to be filled in by the Communities assisted by them. The Consuls, strictly as a matter of courtesy, complied with the invitation, and the Communities in returning the forms, carefully erased the phrase "FORM OF APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION…" etc. The Consuls forwarded the forms on to the Department of Education, but at the same time, they clearly pointed out that, in doing so, they were merely performing an act purely administrative, which did not derogate in any way the from the privileges and liberty they enjoyed. But, what was the reward for such an act of kindness? An Officer of Health immediately visited the religious Communities, and then, an intimation dated 14th September…was sent to all the Communities beginning: 'With reference to your application for permission TO MAINTAIN YOUR SCHOOL'!!! When and by whom was such a

[28] Ibid.

> permission asked for? From all that we have related above, does it not seem that this was a trap?[29]

Faced with unrelenting attacks on the proposed legislation, Lord Plumer appealed to the Colonial Office that the British Government should "make Catholic opinion in Europe realize that the Mandatory for Palestine has no intention to seek to exercise, under the cloak of legislations, any interference with Catholic instruction to adherents of that confession inconsistent with the provisions of the Mandate."[30] However, the Colonial Office refused to launch such a publicity campaign, stating that, in effect, "they ask that H.M.G. should instruct Catholic opinion in Europe and the Vatican, that in the case of Catholic non-assisted schools, it is not the intention of the Palestine Government fully to use the powers which in the draft Ordinance they propose to take."[31] In short, Plumer's proposed solution to the controversy was to communicate that the Palestine Government was officially substituting its own Education Ordinance in place of the old Ottoman one, but that in practice, enforcement would be just as lax.

Instead, the Colonial Office pushed the Palestine Government to whittle down its powers of supervision, not just in implementation, but in the legal text itself. "An alternative… is to redraft the Ordinance and Regulations so as to define clearly and exactly the powers which the legislation confers on the Palestine Government in respect of religious non-assisted schools."[32] One official recommended the following course of action:

---

[29] Ibid.
[30] T.I.K. Lloyd, "Draft Education Ordinance, Etc." November 28, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

> I should therefore prefer definitely to abandon the claim that the Mandate entitles the Palestine Government to enforce on religious schools 'educational requirements of a general nature'. If it is possible in practice to distinguish between schools of religious bodies and schools of national bodies… I see no reason why educational requirements of a general character should not be imposed on the latter class of schools…The position would then be that, in the case of schools of religious bodies (not necessarily schools imparting only religious instruction), the Palestine Government would take the minimum powers necessary to ensure public order and good government.[33]

The maintenance of "public order and good government" would only enable the Palestine Government to demand "the dismissal of any teacher convicted of an offense involving moral turpitude" and to ensure the hygienic and sanitary conditions of the school were adequate. Schools maintained by religious bodies would be exempted from all other regulations. However, the practical difficulties involved in distinguishing between schools maintained by religious bodies as opposed to (European) national ones proved insurmountable, and the CO thus recommended all concessions given to the former class of schools be extended to the latter as well. A minute dated December 24, 1928, noted, "Mr. Lloyd discussed amended draft with [Humphrey] Bowman on Friday morning. He was rather reluctant to see the powers taken in the draft Ordinance whittled down, but we at last induced him to agree to the memo."[34]

After months of contestation between the Colonial Office and administrators in Palestine, the following categories of private religious schools were finally adopted: 1. Assisted schools in receipt of public aid, 2. Non-assisted schools in which religious instruction exclusively was given, and 3. Non-assisted schools maintained by religious bodies in which some secular instruction was given. The first category

[33] Ibid.
[34] S. Wilson. Untitled minute, December 24, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

of schools would be subject to the whole of the Ordinance, with the exception that the Government had no rights of supervision over religious curriculum or teachers of religious subjects. It was agreed that schools in which religious instruction exclusively was given should be exempt from the whole of the Ordinance, save for sanitary requirements deemed necessary for the sake of public health.

The third category of schools—which included most Catholic and missionary schools—proved the most difficult to address. After much discussion about the necessity of registration for schools and teachers, the Colonial Office recommended these schools be exempted from both clauses. Additionally, a clause reserving for the High Commissioner the right to "require the dismissal of any teacher who has been convicted of any criminal offence, or who has been shown… to have imparted teaching of a seditious, disloyal or otherwise harmful character" was deleted. The Director of Education and his immediate deputy would have the authority to visit schools, but not inspect them, and this only after "due notice" was given. Assurances would be extended that "the power to visit…and request certain information does not confer on the Director… any power to demand changes in the curriculum or in the internal administration of schools."[35] In the end, the only provisions that fully applied to schools maintained by religious bodies were those related to sanitation and hygiene. T.I.K. Lloyd of the Colonial Office summarized these points in a letter to the Foreign Office requesting them to arrange for diplomatic representation of the Government's position at the Vatican. He noted that while "it would perhaps be open to the Palestine Government to impose educational requirements of a more

[35] T.I.K. Lloyd to Foreign Office, March 1, 1929. TNA, CO 733/165/5.

stringent character" on schools maintained by religious bodies, "the subject of education in Palestine is complicated by the presence of so many communities and religions it is desirable to proceed with the utmost circumspection."[36]

It is noteworthy that Barlassina remained unwilling to accept any Government inspection of his schools or comply with new regulatory provisions, with the exception that he "realized the right of the Government to supervise the Hygiene and Sanitation of the schools." He qualified this admission by demanding "the Government to be satisfied with arrangements suited to slender means, and not of such a pretentious character as could not be found even in the best places of London or Paris."[37] Suffice it to say that many schools in Palestine were not able to meet the Health Department's requirements, which stipulated that schools must have running taps, toilets, "proper" furnishings and a playground.

Yet, what this example nonetheless demonstrates is the emergence of a public health discourse that asserted the government's unequivocal right to inspect, supervise and enforce certain sanitary conditions. As concerns that purportedly transcended the narrow confines of politics and sought only the public good, such regulations reached into the private space of religious education in ways in which no other body of legislation could. Moreover, although they may have tried to shirk government oversight, religious communities largely acknowledged that matters of health and hygiene fell within the legitimate scope of its authority. While a full analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of the current project, it is nevertheless worth noting the ways in which this public health discourse paralleled that which

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

claimed to speak in the name of apolitical, scientifically validated, pedagogic necessity.

Communal and the Sectarian Game

I have argued thus far that officials in the Colonial Office gradually whittled down the provisions of the Education Ordinance to create categories of exception for religious instruction, teachers of religious subjects and schools maintained by religious bodies. The final form of the Education Ordinance exempted from all provisions those schools in which only religious instruction was given, waived licensing requirements for teachers of religious subjects, and promised not to interfere in the religious curriculum of any non-government school irrespective of whether it was in receipt of public funds. It is clear from the archival record that the impulse for these measures stemmed primarily from the desire to maintain diplomatic tranquility with European countries that maintained missionary schools in Palestine. Yet the resulting compromise—namely designating religious education as a category exempted from Governmental control—had consequences that reached far beyond the realm of Christian missionary schools.

Ironically, it was the great champion of religious values, Jerome Farrell, who, at an earlier phase in his career, voiced the only word of caution regarding this legal structure. The Ordinance relied on legal terms that "require very careful definition" in a setting where "such definitions are neither possible nor desirable." As Farrell remarked:

> It is not always easy to distinguish schools giving only religious instruction from schools of a religious character giving also some secular instruction. Strictly regarded, no school, except for adults, can come under 1. at all, but Moslem schools teaching reading and writing from the Quran, and teaching

> law, logic, etc., might claim to be exclusively religious, since Islam touches every human activity. Such schools are precisely those which require most moral supervision, and possibly political supervision too.[38]

Farrell was unique among administrators in identifying religious schools as potential political actors, though even his understanding of this possibility remained limited. Thus, in the above passage, it is primarily "moral supervision" that such schools required, a sentiment that was wholly consistent with the emphasis on religious education as an exercise in character formation.

The Education Ordinance gave rise to other unintended consequences as well, some of which related to the type of communal organization the Ordinance envisaged. Certain regulations were borrowed from Great Britain's own education reform acts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and as such, were designed around a religious context that was quite different than that of Palestine. For example, Local Education Authorities were first founded in England as a result of the 1902 (coincidentally-named) Balfour Education Act. The law established LEAs to replace local school boards, which had proved popular among liberals, Non-Conformists, and radicals because they allowed for the creation of non-sectarian schools for areas and populations not served by Anglican or public schools.[39] Local education taxes funded the new board schools, while Anglican schools were ineligible for any portion of these rates. In 1902 the Conservative Government abolished school boards and transferred responsibility to open and maintain

---

[38] Jerome Farrell, "J. Farrell's comments [on the Draft Education Ordinance]." TNA, CO 733/191/2. The document is undated, though this passage is quoted almost verbatim in a letter to the Foreign Office dated September 19, 1930 (Letter number 77198/30 in the same folder), which would probably place Farrell's comments in the summer of 1930.

[39] Until the late nineteenth century, most schools in England were maintained by the Anglican Church. Certain exceptions included the "public schools," which were public in the sense that they were open to anyone who passed the entrance examination and could afford their steep fees.

schools, pay teacher salaries and provide textbooks and equipment to LEAs. Importantly, the Act also made Anglican schools eligible for a portion of any rates levied by LEAs in an attempt to strengthen their position vis-à-vis board schools.[40]

British officials inserted a similar provision into the Palestine Education Ordinance, which stipulated that any school maintained by a community recognized by the Religious Communities Organization Ordinance was eligible for a portion of education rates levied by LEAs. The Religious Communities Organization Ordinance was adopted in 1926 chiefly to appease the Zionist Organization, which was the only group that ever applied for statutory recognition under its terms. The legislation provided that "each Religious Community recognized by the Government shall enjoy autonomy for the internal affairs of the Community," and conferred upon the Community the right to hold property, enter into contracts and levee taxes on its members.[41] Unless they officially opted out (which a number of Orthodox Jews did), all Jews above the age of 18 were automatically included in the official Jewish community of Palestine, or Knesset Israel, with the "Va'ad Leumi" (national counsel) serving as its executive committee. It was therefore the Zionist community and its political organ that gained statutory recognition under the Religious Communities Organization Ordinance, and which subsequently became entitled to additional privileges through the Education Ordinance. In this regard, the Va'ad Leumi schools gained a similar legal status as that granted in England to schools maintained by the Anglican Church.

[40] Searby, *Children, School, and Society in nineteenth-century England*: 18-20.
[41] Government of Palestine, "Religious Communities Organization Ordinance." No. 19 of 1926.

With this example in mind, a careful reading of the Ordinance reveals that its provisions regarding religious schools took for granted the existence of recognized communal authorities that were entitled to represent believers' educational interests and make political claims on their behalf. For instance, the licensing of teachers by each communion's "Religious Head" was clearly adopted with Catholic protests in mind, but could become quite problematic when dealing with more diffuse or contested structures of religious authority. This is a lesser-noticed consequence of sectarianism, which, in locating political power at the level of the religious community, renders it imperative to centralize control of the community in a singular entity.

As such, the Va'ad Leumi was as integral to Palestine's sectarian landscape as the Supreme Muslim Council, though neither body ever gained uncontested recognition by the community it was authorized to represent. The differences between the two bodies, their creation, rights and responsibilities are immense and should not be conflated. The Supreme Muslim Council was a British invention whereas the Va'ad Leumi grew from within the *yishuv* and was granted official recognition by the Mandatory Government. Nevertheless, a full appreciation of how the Ordinance took shape must account for the protests from the Va'ad Leumi and the Supreme Muslim Council as "Religious Heads" that were either self-appointed or newly manufactured.

In his seminal study of education in Mandate Palestine, Tibawi maintained that, "Latin opposition considerably weakened those portions of the law [Education Ordinance] dealing with private schools, while Jewish opposition did equal damage

to those portions dealing with public schools."[42] He also noted that "so long as the actual documents dealing with many sides of the subject…remain secret in the archives in Whitehall and elsewhere, it is not possible to examine in detail the stand which was taken by the Vatican, France and Italy on one side, and the Zionists on the other."[43] Fortunately, many of these documents are now declassified, and they shed a great deal of light on the nature of these protests.

Generally speaking, the Zionist response to the proposed legislation was to advocate two, somewhat contradictory, courses of action. On the one hand, the Zionist Organization lobbied the Palestine Government and the Colonial Office for explicit recognition of an autonomous Zionist school system, writing, "the special position of the Jewish Agency under the Mandate should be recognized in the Ordinance, and…express provision should be made for the special treatment…of schools maintained by the Jewish Agency."[44] The Zionist Organization argued its schools represented a public school system that paralleled that maintained by the Department of Education, thereby casting itself as an equal party to the Mandatory Government. As discussed in Chapter Two, after their classification as "public schools," Zionist schools were entitled to a share of Government funds based on the percentage of Jews in the total population, paid in the form of an annual block grant to the Va'ad Leumi. Yet, the Jewish Agency argued that the schools were also "community schools", i.e. those maintained by a religious community under the

[42] Khalidi, *The Iron Cage : the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*: Chapter 2.
[43] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 153.
[44] Zionist Organization, "Palestine Education Ordinance" (memorandum). December 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

Religious Communities Organization Ordinance. As "community schools" Zionist schools were eligible for a portion of the tax revenue collected by the LEAs; such classification also required the Director of Education for the Palestine Government to consult with the Zionist Education Department in any matter related to these schools.[45]

In sum, the Zionist Organization sought to secure official recognition of its schools as both public *and* communal entities, a demand which the sectarian nature of the Mandate's legal structure was able to affirm. The partition of Palestine into distinct social and political bodies is thus already apparent in gestures that equate "the public" with the religious community. Taken to the logical extreme, such thinking effectively eradicates any concept of a non-sectarian public space. If this partition was more conceptual than material during these negotiations in the late 1920's, it appeared as an obvious reality to the members of the Palestine Royal Commission in 1936.

Alongside its push for official recognition of the Jewish Agency's "special position" and the corresponding status of its schools, the Zionist Organization lobbied the Palestine Government to delegate the vast portion of its educational authority to Zionist officials in the *va'ad ha-ẖinuch* (Board of Education) and *maẖlakat ha-ẖinuch* (Department of Education). For example, the Zionist Organization argued that the Ordinance gave the Department of Education too much

[45] Government of Palestine, "Education Ordinance 1933." The second clause of the Ordinance states, "In his discharge of his functions in regard to any group of public schools established or maintained in part by a Local Authority or an association, the Director shall consult with such authority or association." Officials inserted this clause in a compromise with the Zionist Organization, which demanded that in his dealings with the Hebrew Public System, the Director of Education consult with the Jewish Agency's Education Department. See Zionist Organization memorandum, "Palestine Education Ordinance 1928." December 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

control over the appointment and dismissal of teachers, powers that should properly reside in the hands of the Zionist Director of Education.[46] The basis of this request represented nothing less than an all-out assault on the Orientalist expertise of British administrators:

> Seeing that it is admittedly impossible for any non-Jewish authority to execute the technical duties involved in the direction of the National Hebrew Educational system, it is proposed that the same article [that recognized the Jewish Agency] should invest the Director of the Jewish public school system of education with the necessary powers, while reserving for the Director of the Department of Education full powers in all such matters as should properly be subject to governmental control.[47]

Colonial officials chafed at the suggestion that managing the Zionist school system was somehow beyond their capacity and rejected the argument that the Jews possessed any innate pedagogic or administrative prowess that distinguished them from Palestinian Arabs. Rather, according to Jerome Farrell, "until little more than a century ago the Jews…had like the Arabs a markedly medieval form of oriental culture."[48] The battle over educational expertise remained a source of contention long after the Education Ordinance was promulgated, as reflected by the following Colonial Office memo from 1941:

> When I saw Mr. Ben Gurion recently he discussed at length the usual Zionist contention that a Jewish community is unsuited to Crown Colony administration, and produced as an illustration of what he regarded as the extraordinary impertinence of the Palestine Government in assuming that they could profitably interfere in the administration of the Jewish community's educational organization. In his view, Jews of Palestine are far too cultivated and experienced to be prepared to subordinate their organization to the directions of a Palestine Colonial government.[49]

---

[46] Zionist Organization Memorandum, "Palestine Education Ordinance." December 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[47] Zionist Organization Memorandum, September 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[48] Jerome Farrell. "The Distribution of Educational Benefits in Palestine." December 17, 1945. MEC, Jerome Farrell collection.
[49] Sir Harry Luke, Untitled minute. October 10, 1941. TNA, CO 733/442/17.

Unwilling to sit on the receiving end of colonial tutelage, the Zionist Organization desired official recognition of its schools as public entities without the corresponding measure of government supervision, at least from the Government of Palestine. Consequently, controls that it thought appropriate for the Arab Public System were dismissed as unsuitable when applied to Zionist schools, though both were technically "public" bodies.[50]

Conversely, its letters display a great deal of anxiety about centralizing control of Jewish education in the hands of the quasi-state apparatus administered by the Va'ad Leumi. For instance, when the first draft of the Ordinance effectively put Local Education Authorities in charge of all schools in their district, including Zionist ones, the Zionist Organization petitioned the government to allow for separate sub-committees in districts with mixed populations, for Jewish and Arab schools respectively. The government complied and furthermore, stipulated that in mixed areas, Local Education Authority would include two nominees of the Zionist Organization. The latter, however, deemed these measures inadequate, as "the proposed new regulation is to apply only in mixed areas, so that there would apparently be no representatives of the Zionist Organization on the Committee dealing with the Hebrew schools in a Jewish area." The result, they feared, was "that

[50] For example, the Zionist Organization objected that the Education Ordinance would provide the High Commissioner with power over curriculum in public schools, including those of the Hebrew Public System. The Zionist Organization expressed its alarm that such curricular powers even extended to religious instruction, which—while certainly not objectionable in the Arab Public System—was out of the question for the Zionist schools. "It is not thought that this is a power which it is intended that the Government should actually exercise," the Zionist Organization wrote, as "it does not follow that it is necessary or desirable that the Government should take the initiative in laying down regulations as to the syllabus…in schools which are not Government schools." Zionist Organization Memorandum, "Palestine Education Ordinance." December 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

the unity of the Hebrew school system is not ensured by the new legislation."[51] Thus it was not just government or Arab control of their schools that the Zionist Organization feared, but any decentralized control, even by Jews themselves.

In issue after issue, the refrain remained the same. The recognition of Zionist schools as "public" entities was of vital importance, but any corresponding supervision should reside in the hands of Zionist leaders. Centralized control was essential, but the Government of Palestine was not the legitimate entity to exercise it. In short, the Zionist Organization requested official recognition from an entity whose very legitimacy it constantly called into question. This mix of audacity and insecurity was not unique to Zionist claims regarding education, but rather emblematic of a larger dynamic whereby the Jewish state in the making wavered between bold political assertions and recognition of its own weakness. In education, as elsewhere, the Zionist Organization did not want government control, but still needed its support.

As it turned out, the Zionist Organization got much less than it asked for, at least as far as the letter of the law was concerned. "The Zionists have had their say in the matter," wrote an official in the Colonial Office in 1930, "but…it is not possible to accept most of their suggestions, and it seems possible, in the present agitated state of Jewish feeling, that the promulgation of the Ordinance will be greeted as another deathblow to Zionist aspirations in Palestine. I submit that we must face that."[52] The final draft of the Ordinance made no mention of the Jewish Agency or any other Zionist body, though it did attach a schedule of schools that were to be recognized as

[51] Ibid.
[52] Sir John Shuckburg, Untitled minute. November 11, 1930. TNA, CO 733/191/2.

the nucleus of the Hebrew Public System. Similarly, no mention was made of the Zionist Education Department or its Director and the Ordinance granted them no powers. It did, however, stipulate that in his dealings with schools maintained by a communal association, "the Director shall consult with such authority or association."[53] Moreover, officials in the Department of Education promised the Zionist Organization that the Hebrew Public System would not be subjected to the full regulatory scope of the Ordinance.[54] Yet as I argued above, the impact of the Education Ordinance in terms of enforcement (or non-enforcement in the case described) is only part of the story. Perhaps of even greater significance is the type of sectarian organization that it envisaged, and ultimately, helped create.

Another source of tension stemmed from the fact that Zionist schools were in direct competition with private bodies with respect to the education of Jewish children in Palestine. A number of Jewish schools were maintained by organizations such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Anglo-Jewish Association and Agudat Israel. Numerous *ḥederim* and *talmudei torah* existed, particularly in the urban centers of the Old Yishuv, in which children acquired the religious knowledge required for Orthodox communal life. Taken as a whole, schools outside the Hebrew Public System educated approximately one-third of Jewish children in Palestine throughout much of the Mandate period.[55]

---

[53] Government of Palestine, "Education Ordinance 1933." Part 1, clause 2. For more details regarding the impetus for this clause, see Zionist Organization Memorandum, "Palestine Education Ordinance." December 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[54] Reshef, *ha-ḥinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 160.
[55] Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1929-1930*. According to the report there were 21,031 pupils in schools maintained by the Jewish Agency versus 10,565 in private institutions of this type. The ratio of pupils in private to Jewish Agency schools remained fairly

However, the structure of educational funding hardly accounted for this reality, particularly after the Va'ad Leumi gained recognition under the Religious Communities Ordinance as the official representative of Jews in Palestine. Groups who refused to participate in Zionist political bodies—chiefly Ashkenazi Jews from the Old Yishuv—were no longer recognized as being part of Palestine's official Jewish community. They thereby sacrificed the two chief streams of public financing for education: First, the annual block grant for Jewish education, based on the total number of Jews as a percentage of Palestine's total population, but given to the Va'ad Leumi exclusively; and secondly, tax revenue collected by Local Education Authorities, which only public and "community" (i.e. Zionist) schools were eligible to receive. As one official in the Colonial Office characterized the situation, with regard to "schools of Jews who find themselves outside the recognized Jewish Community, it was alleged that there was unfair discrimination, since they would not be eligible for those financial benefits which might be anticipated for the schools of the recognized Jewish Community."[56]

After a revised draft of the Ordinance was published in the summer of 1928, the Government of Palestine received letters of protest from a variety of Orthodox groups, including representatives of Etz Haim, the Diskin Orphanage, the neighborhood of Mea Shearim, Congregation Sha'arei Torah, the Council of the Ashkenazic Jewish Community and Agudat Israel.[57] The letters display a general

---

constant until 1945, when many private schools were absorbed into the Va'ad Leumi system. See Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1945-46*. 13.

[56] Colonial Office, "Palestine Education Ordinance and Regulations" - Draft memo for the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies. January 1929. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

[57] Petition addressed to Chief Secretary, "27th Ab 5688" (August 13, 1928); Council of Ashkenazic Jewish Community to OAG, August 13, 1928; Agudat Yisrael to OAG, August 13, 1928; Congregation

sense of anxiety about the prospect of any Government control of Jewish religious education. "Education is the soul of Israel and outsiders can by no means understand our mentality," wrote the rabbi of Sha'arei Torah, who was "amazed to hear that the Government intended to interfere in the internal affairs of the education system to which we adhere, despite provision of the Mandate according to which Government is not to interfere in religious matters."[58] Note that the status of education as a "religious matter" is assumed here, and with it, the consequent rejection that the government could claim any regulatory authority over education as a state concern.

Other responses were more positive, noting with satisfaction that "the Government remained faithful to the spirit of Article 16 of the Mandate and treated religious instruction in schools with the utmost caution: and have not confused it with secular instruction [sic]."[59] And indeed, in subsequent drafts of the Ordinance, officials exempted schools imparting religious instruction exclusively (a category into which most *ḥederim* and *talmudei torah* fell) from all provisions with the exception of sanitary regulations. The chief complaint that remained was that "it is most unreasonable to impose a rate upon people who are not themselves entitled to benefit from their own rate."[60] Orthodox groups therefore requested exemption from the requirement to pay taxes levied by Local Education Authorities since their schools were not "community schools" and were therefore ineligible for any portion

---

Shaarei Torah to OAG, August 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8. While internal rivalries often plagued the Old Yishuv, the dates of the letters suggest some sort of concerted effort to oppose the Ordinance. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

[58] Congregation Shaarei Torah (signed "Joseph Rabbi") to OAG, August 14, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.

[59] Petition addressed to Chief Secretary, "27th Ab 5688" (August 13, 1928). TNA, CO 733/146/8.

[60] Council of Ashkenazic Jewish Community to OAG, August 13, 1928. TNA, CO/146/8.

of these funds. However, British officials did not consent either to exempt members of the Old Yishuv from the education rate or to amend the Ordinance so that schools outside of the recognized Jewish Community could apply for assistance.

This was hardly the end of the matter. Whereas in the 1920s, Agudat Israel cooperated with other Orthodox factions to protest the statutory recognition given to the Zionist community by the Religious Communities Organization Ordinance,[61] the group spent much of the following decade lobbying to be legally recognized as a discrete Jewish community. Such recognition would theoretically restore their communal rights in issues of personal status (heretofore handled by the Zionist religious courts) and enable their schools to receive a portion of local education rates. The 1934 Palestine Annual Report notes that the Government (acting as an "intermediary") had convened negotiations between representatives from Agudat Israel and the Va'ad Leumi in the hope of absorbing the former into the "community" represented by the latter. The heart of the compromise involved dividing Jewish affairs into "religious" and "lay" categories overseen by distinct committees. If it had succeeded, such a compromise would have effectively left "secular" matters in the hands of the Va'ad Leumi, whose political standing derived from its status as a "religious community."

This attempted reconciliation of Jewish interests was challenging to enact, chiefly because the parties involved came with divergent ideas as to the boundaries

[61] Agudat Israel combined forces with the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazic Old Yishuv, Rabbi Sonnenfeld, and other members of the *va'ad ha-ir* (city council of the Old Yishuv) to oppose the Religious Communities Organization Act and the corresponding recognition of the Zionist faction as the official Jewish community. See: *Vaad Ha'ir* of the Ashkenazic Jewish Community to Secretary of State for the Colonies, April 24, 1925. TNA, FO 371/10839.

(or the existence of a boundary at all) between religious and lay matters. The Va'ad Leumi's representatives proposed to cede "religious" matters, including supervision of the Rabbinate, *shechita* (ritual slaughter) and burial services, to a Board "consisting of persons with a sympathetic attitude to religion," while retaining for itself control of "all economic, social and political affairs."[62] By contrast, Agudat Israel defined religious affairs in a far more expansive fashion, encompassing "the Rabbinate, Shechita, burial, education, maintenance of orphans, treatment of the sick, etc."[63] In an era where religious and secular were still very much categories in formation, a compromise of the type envisioned by the government was all but impossible to achieve.

In a manner that echoed its broader self-representation as an impartial mediator among fanatic sects "swarming...about the corpse of religion," the Mandatory government cast itself as an objective party attempting to reconcile a petty squabble between warring Jewish factions.[64] The Palestine Annual Report continued to state that incorporating Agudat Israel into the official Jewish community was preferred over the recognition of it as a second community, lest a schism emerge among Palestinian Jews: "The hope and intention of the Government are by this means to satisfy the legitimate requirements of the Agudath Israel without perpetuating the schism in the Jewish population of Palestine which separate recognition of the Agudath Israel as a community under the Religious

[62] Draft Agreement by the Vaad Leumi, Enclosure III. TNA, FO 371/18959.
[63] Draft Agreement by the Agudath Israel, Enclosure IV. TNA, FO 371/18959.
[64] Harry Charles Luke, Chief Secretary for Palestine, 1927. Quoted and discussed at length in Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*: 44-74.

Communities Organization Ordinance, 1926, might involve."[65] The irony, of course, was that such this schism was largely the byproduct of government legislation that bestowed official recognition on one portion of the Jewish community and granted it quasi-ecclesiastical powers over all others. That these "religious" powers were granted to the Va'ad Leumi at a time when many Zionist immigrants were avowedly secular or even atheists—while Jews who maintained the highest level of religious observance were not recognized as part of the Jewish community—was but one of the many points of tension. As we shall see in the final chapter of this study, this categorical confusion was only part of a larger dispute regarding the nature of Jewishness and the definition of "religion" itself.

While the High Commissioner was adamant to bridge the "schism" between Agudat Israel and the Va'ad Leumi, his correspondence with the Colonial Office also demonstrates that he misunderstood the nature of their conflict. When representatives from Agudat Israel proposed the creation of a second *beit din* (rabbinical court) so its members did not have to submit to the authority of Zionist courts, the High Commissioner greeted the proposal with apprehension.[66] At the most basic level, he could not comprehend the resistance to a unified religious authority given that members of Agudat Israel were "not in any fundamental respect in theory or in practice at variance" with the Orthodox Jews within the Zionist fold. What is noteworthy about this claim for our purposes is the High Commissioner's extreme reluctance to recognize the Jewish community as a heterogeneous entity, indeed, as multiple Jewish communities. He may have been correct in stating that

[65] Government of Palestine, *1934 Annual Report.*
[66] A.G. Wauchope to Colonial Office, July 12, 1935. FO 371/18959.

many Zionist Jews were as religiously observant as those within Agudat Israel; however he did not grasp that disagreements related to observance were of lesser importance than the larger dispute, namely, the replacement of numerous communities and religious courts bearing distinct *minhagim* (customs that can assume the status of law) with a single religious authority under Zionist control.[67] The fact that a single *beit din* had never exercised juridical authority over the whole of Palestinian Jewry since the time of the Sanhedrin was apparently unimportant. [68]

In commenting on the High Commissioner's dispatch, the Foreign Office noted, "the Government are clearly prejudiced against the Agudath Israel, which is doubtless explained by their reluctance to allow a schism to develop in the official organization of the Jewish community, with its resultant administrative inconveniences."[69] As I have argued, such "administrative inconveniences" were at least partially government creations insofar as they related to regulations (including the Education Ordinance) that assumed the existence of a singular religious authority. Substantive divisions between the Va'ad Leumi and Agudat Israel did exist, and certainly predated the Mandate. However, they assumed the form of a

[67] Rabbi Hershel Schachter records the following anecdote regarding the Brisker Rav, who famously avoided involvement in political disputes: "I heard that [R. Joseph Soloveitchik] mentioned at that point how his uncle (R. Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik) did not usually participate in controversy and demonstrations, such as when there was an attempt to open mixed [gender] swimming pools in Jerusalem, or matters that include violations of Shabbos, because those are (just) specific sins. Only when they wanted to erect a Sanhedrin in the Heikhal Shlomo building – on this he loudly protested in order to end the matter, because he saw in it a much greater matter, namely, *ziyuf ha-Torah* (misrepresentation of Torah)." R. Hershel Schachter, *be-ikvei ha-tzon*, p. 23.
[68] The Sanhedrin was the assembly of judges in ancient Israel that ruled on *halachic* (Jewish legal) matters. Each city was entitled to a Sanhedrin of 23 judges, and a single Great Sanhedrin with 71 judges acted as a court of final appeal. The Sanhedrin was dissolved in 358 CE and various attempts to revive it—famously by Napoleon—and by segments of the Jewish community have been met with widespread hostility. The normative Orthodox position is that the Sanhedrin cannot be reconvened until the days of the Messiah.
[69] JG Ward, August 31, 1935 minute. TNA, FO 371/18959.

dispute over the right to act as the exclusive representative of the Jewish community—with the corresponding privileges—only within the context of British rule.

In recent years, scholars from multiple disciples have turned their attention to the politics of sectarianism, its discursive characteristics and historical consequences.[70] While the contours of sectarian rule are clearly discernable through legal structures that made the religious group the basic political unit, I have argued that the Education Ordinance (along with other regulations) also generated consequences for relations *within* each religious group, as argued above. Having recognized Knesset Israel as the official representative body of the Jewish community in Palestine, Jews who found themselves outside this community had no legitimate claim to Government assistance for educating their children. Legal structures such as the Religious Communities and Education Ordinances functioned to transform the very notion of community from a group bounded by language and custom that functioned alongside numerous co-communities, into a monolith whose primary purpose was political organization.

Jewish identity—historically fractured along various political, linguistic and ethno-religious (*edah*) axes—had to be forcefully suppressed into a singular, homogenized strand in order to function within a culture of sectarianism. Yet it is crucial to state that the pressure to homogenize *did not* originate with British colonial rule. Rather, the crafting of a revitalized, uniform, Hebraicized Jewish

[70] A sampling of this important scholarship includes Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon*; Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*.

identity was part and parcel of the Zionist project from its inception. What we witness in Mandate Palestine is the convergence of two rather complementary discourses with regard to the function (if not the nature, as we shall see in Chapter Five) of religious identity. The confluence of colonial sectarian policies that concentrated religious authority in the hands of a single entity with the Zionist pretense to encompass and represent the full range of Jewish existence produced a political structure that struggled to accommodate those, like the members of Agudat Israel, who opted out of the "Jewish Community." Here, the act of epistemic violence inherent within colonial politics only mirrored that performed by nationalism itself.

Arab Education and the Palestinian Public Space

To conclude this discussion, we must take into account protests by Palestinian Arab groups, which, on the whole, were of an entirely different character than those emerging from Zionist quarters. At the most basic level, official protests from Palestinian leaders were generally milder than those raised by either Jewish or Christian bodies. Though they expressed concern at certain provisions, Palestinian groups largely acquiesced to the principle of Government supervision. This, I believe, stemmed partially from the immediate historical past, in which the Ottoman Empire exercised similar educational oversight. The overriding cause, however, was that Palestinian Arabs had no other Government to which to turn, and indeed, no reason to contemplate building a state within a state akin to that created by the Jewish Agency/Va'ad Leumi. While Zionists generally viewed the Mandatory government as a transitory structure that would soon be replaced by the "real" (i.e.

Jewish) government, Palestinians assumed that they would gradually assume control over the existing administration as was occurring in neighboring Arab countries. Despite their consistent opposition to the terms of the Mandate and the refusal to accept its legitimacy, on the whole, Palestinian Arabs lobbied for greater participation within the Mandatory Government, not the delegation of its powers to a parallel entity.

Perhaps because of this fundamentally different relationship to the public realm represented by the Government of Palestine and its schools, the Education Committee of the Supreme Muslim Council's protest against the Ordinance differed from that put forward by the Zionist Organization. For example, the Committee complained that the Ordinance enabled education or medical officials the right to inspect schools at any time, so that "with no definite procedure… inspection will be unnecessarily repeated." They suggested that the provision be amended to "regularize the inspection of schools whether for education or medical purposes."[71] The Council neither questioned the need for such inspection nor nominated an outside party to complete it. Similarly, the Committee took umbrage with the provision requiring all teachers to register with the Department of Education, which was thought would "impose an undue restriction on private and communal schools, which may be obliged from time to time to engage teachers from outside Palestine." Once again, however, the Committee offered a measured compromise, namely that the emergency license usually granted to unregistered teachers for a duration of three-months be extended to a full academic year.

[71] Haj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini to Chief Secretary, August 19, 1928. TNA, CO/733/146/8.

The Supreme Muslim Council did protest more forcefully against the provision that granted the High Commissioner the authority to close any school he deemed was being conducted "in a manner contrary to good order and morals." The Council noted, "there is no doubt that differing meanings and interpretations may be given to the term 'good order and morals', which differ according to the locality, religion and sex…it is believed that the interpretation of the term and the issue for closing of schools should be vested in the Courts."[72] This remark was consistent with the general tenor of Palestinian protests over education: it was not that the Government did not have the prerogative to exercise certain powers, but that it should do so in concert with local bodies. In the same vein, the memo from the Committee reiterated its suggestion that an education council be recognized by the Ordinance, "in which the inhabitants would be represented and whose members should participate in the proper enforcement of the Ordinance and the regulations issued thereunder." Such a Council was of special importance in Palestine "in view of the non-existence in this country of any legislative body representing the inhabitants which would take into consideration the wishes and needs of the population."[73]

Absent such a representative body, Palestinian leaders hoped to at least expand the role of Local Education Authorities. As mentioned above, LEAs were created primarily to levee rates in order to supplement central funding for education, but given no real administrative powers. While the Jewish Agency

[72] Ibid.
[73] Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini to Chief Secretary, August 19, 1928. TNA, CO/733/146/8.

lobbied the Government to transfer much of the Department of Education's authority to the Zionist Organization's internal education department, Palestinian protests sought the delegation of certain powers to LEAs. For instance, in the memorandum submitted by the Supreme Muslim Council, the latter wrote, "The Local Education Committee should be vested with powers wider than those provided for in the Regulations so long as such Committee is the responsible body for the maintenance of the school. The Local Education Committee should be given exclusive jurisdiction in licensing teachers and in matters referred to in Articles 18, 19, 22 and 24 of the Regulations; and therefore should have power to withdraw, transfer or cancel licenses." [74] Similarly, a letter from the Jerusalem Municipal Council recommended the following course of action:

> More powers should be allowed to the local education authority in that all the powers given to the Director of Education be now vested in them as from the administrative point of view. These authorities will cooperate with the Director of Education in all the administration on condition that the latter will have no right to take action on any administrative matter before the Local Authority gives its decision.[75]

In what must have been a shock for colonial administrators, the Municipal Council demanded the creation of a "General Education Authority" comprised of "representatives elected from the local authorities [LEAs] to supervise the work of the Department of Education in Palestine."[76]

As we can see from these petitions, the general tenor of Palestinian objections and recommendations was quite distinct from that expressed by Zionist leaders. Both political factions found fault with the Department of Education's

[74] Ibid.
[75] Jerusalem Municipal Council memorandum, August 16, 1928. TNA, CO 733/146/8.
[76] Ibid.

attempts to supervise schools and regulate the conditions under which they operated, and yet, the way in which each party responded to these attempts revealed a great deal about differing views of the Mandatory government as the legitimate bearer of sovereignty. The Zionist Organization lobbied for the recognition of an exclusively Jewish public space that was represented by its own quasi-state apparatus and supervised by its own education administrators. Fiercely protective of its autonomy and anxious about extending its control over *all* Jewish education in Palestine, Zionist leaders pressured the Director of Education to delegate many of his powers to the *maḫlakat ha-ḫinuch* maintained by the Jewish Agency. These demands advanced a single agenda, namely, to gain recognition from the Government of Palestine that it was not the legitimate source of authority over the Jewish population, and correspondingly, to centralize power in the parallel state apparatus being constructed under Zionist auspices. The greater participation of Jews in the management of their education therefore went hand-in-hand with the erosion of their presence in a general Palestinian public space inhabited by multiple groups and overseen, however contentiously, by the Mandatory government.

In contrast, at least during the first decade of the Mandate when debates over the Education Ordinance occurred, Palestinian leaders responded to the legislation with a greater willingness to compromise with the government and the Department of Education. They largely acquiesced to the principle of government supervision, and attempted to reach a *modus vivendi* with education administrators regarding concrete points such as sanitary inspection and the licensing of teachers. Above all, they demanded a seat at the government's table, not a separate administrative

structure. Likewise, both the Supreme Muslim Council and the Jerusalem Municipal Council lobbied for the expanded role of local administrative bodies, like the LEAs, which were regarded, importantly, as *extensions* of the central government rather than rival institutions.

These proposed forays into the realm of school administration were unacceptable to the Department of Education, which argued that Arabs who petitioned for such powers were welcome to found and oversee independent communal institutions for Muslim and Christian students, respectively. In the end, Palestinian Arabs were faced with a Catch 22: the Government public schools afforded them no say in educational matters, and the prospect of gaining greater educational autonomy by organizing on a religious basis entailed the dissolution of national unity.

Finally, I must say some words about the Supreme Muslim Council, which occupied a somewhat awkward position within the sectarian landscape when it came to education. As Rashid Khalidi has argued, the British occupation of Palestine was soon followed by "the creation…of 'Islamic' institutions that had no precedent in that country's history, or indeed in the entirety of Islamic history." According to Khalidi, bodies like the Supreme Muslim Council and the office of Grand Mufti of Palestine were primarily designed to divide the Arab populace on religious lines and, by bestowing some element of prestige to the officeholders, co-opt the notable class into cooperation with the Government. The Council's creation also represented an attempt to divert Arab political energies toward communal matters of religious significance, such as the management of *awqaf* and the appointment of judges to the

shari'a courts. However much to the government's chagrin, the SMC did not provide the desired outlet for Palestinian Arab political frustrations, nor did the SMC embrace the divide between religious and political affairs that the British envisioned. Rather, as Laura Robson has indicated, the Mandate government "unwillingly assisted the emergence of religious nationalism" that drew heavily on Islamic symbolism and rhetoric. Rather than redirecting energies toward a clearly delineated "religious" sphere, the SMC infused the political one with a religious sensibility.

Education, however, occupied a somewhat anomalous space within the framework of British sectarian rule and particularly, the attempt to render the Muslim community a *millet*. Because the Muslim population was the numerical majority in Palestine and therefore the primary beneficiary of Government public schools, it had no reason to contemplate building a parallel school system akin to the Zionist one, which claimed to represent a mere continuation of the educational autonomy Jews enjoyed under Ottoman rule. The SMC did maintain its own system of private schools; however the vast majority of Muslim children attended either government public schools or private *katātīb*.[77] Furthermore, while education in late Ottoman Palestine was arguably seen as a communal matter, the expansion of government public schools with secularized curricula functioned to remove them from "religious" realm in which the SMC could claim jurisdiction.

[77] In 1945, the schools maintained by the Supreme Muslim Council educated 2023 pupils, versus 81,042 in the Arab Public System. Note that 1936-1937 is the last year for which statistics for the Arab Public System are divided according to religion of the pupils. See: Palestine, *Annual Report 1945-46*: 2, 12. The Ottoman public schools were officially open to all, but in actuality they served the Muslim community almost exclusively. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 19.

The result of these cross-currents was that, on one hand, the Palestinian Muslim community was part of the majority population which depended on public social services, as in Ottoman times, and on the other, a religious community, whose autonomy hinged on private initiative. The Government of Palestine thus presided over a shrinking public sphere that forbade political participation within its boundaries, while suggesting that Arab management of education could only occur within the context of Muslim and Christian religious organization. Had this suggestion been fully followed, "the Department of Education in Palestine would have suddenly found itself in a position with no schools to control and no education to direct."[78] As this discussion of the Palestine Education Ordinance reveals, the erasure of a common public space was thus not an unfortunate byproduct of Mandate rule, but an essential characteristic of its legal structure.

[78] ———, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 78.

Chapter 4

Politics, Education and the Boundaries of Religious Knowledge

Surely the church is a place where one day's truce ought to be allowed
to the dissensions and animosities of mankind.[1]

In the Introduction to this study, I offered a variation of Bruno Latour's "modern constitution" as a tool to understand the colonial attempt to delimit proper and improper approaches to education. At the center of this model sits the need to absolutely distinguish between "pure" pedagogic practices and their corrupted forms, associated, as we shall see, with Zionist and private Palestinian endeavors. Thus British administrators would earnestly claim that the Arab Public System nurtured healthy national pride as opposed to national chauvinism; that it taught public service without veering into mass politics; that it embraced religious education as a moral, rather than political, practice; and that all policies were guided by pedagogic best practices rather than the cynical use of education as a form of social engineering. The fact that the boundary between proper and improper practices was constantly transgressed is obvious enough from our review of policies like monolingualism and public health supervision. The following two chapters expand on this central theme by analyzing colonial approaches to religious education and civic engagement on one hand, and the "transgressive" alternatives put forth by Palestinian nationalists and Zionists, on the other.

Understanding this history requires a direct confrontation with the fundamental assumptions upon which British educational planning was based: namely, that of education as a practice distinct from, and indeed outside of, the political realm; and that of religion as

[1] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), 12.

inherently, or at least ideally, apolitical. I suggested in the previous chapter that this understanding of "religion" as an otherworldly venture seemed to shape the Education Ordinance that exempted religious schools from most forms of government supervision. Thus schools imparting only religious instruction were entirely freed from the legislation, and became subject to inspection and other bureaucratic requirements only with the introduction of secular studies like history, geography or mathematics. The seepage of political concerns into the schoolroom therefore constituted nothing less than an *intrusion* that compromised the nature of education itself. While children were to be educated in their "native" language and preserve their "national" culture, administrators nevertheless held that education should never veer into contemporary national politics. Thus "politics" figures in the writings of British officials as a force that upsets the educational equilibrium, rather than as an inevitable component of modern, national schooling under centralized state supervision.

On the other hand, educators assigned a monumental task to religious education. This amounted to nothing less than instilling in children a "universal" moral system that was presumably shared by Palestine's three major monotheistic religions—and yet bore a striking resemblance to a particular form of British Protestantism. Moreover, it was through the cultivation of religious education that children could presumably be shielded from the destructive pull of mass politics. As such, religious education represented a lynchpin in the effort to maintain the "traditional" order in which rule through religious authorities was thought to offer an antidote to popular mobilization.

Building on this theoretical frame, this chapter argues that the Government of Palestine developed an approach to religious education that linked Islam to the cultivation of individual moral virtues. The innovation here lay not in the idea of religion as a site of moral fashioning, but in equating "religion" primarily with individual ethics in a way which excluded other fields of human behavior—commerce, for instance—and knowledge, as subjects like Arabic, history and hygiene were removed from an Islamic framework. In the second half of this chapter, I argue that contemporary Muslim educators largely acquiesced in this educational schema. Curricula and textbooks during this period reflected a heightened concern with individual moral fashioning through ritual practice (*'ibadat*) and devoted less attention to elements of *shari'a* that regulated social behavior (*mu'amalat*). In this respect, the educational content of Islam underwent an arc of secularization similar to that which occurred in Egypt, and that has been productively analyzed by Gregory Starrett with regard to modern schooling and Talal Asad in his study of *shari'a* court reform.[2]

However, based on a case study of the Najah National School in Nablus, I would like to suggest that there was more to the matter than mere colonial mimicry. By exploring articulations of Islam as a civilizational—rather than juridical—system, I suggest that the association of "religion" with individual moral conduct could actually facilitate attempts to overcome Palestine's sectarian divisions by giving rise to an Islam shared by all Arabs, even non-Muslims. Thus, while the legal jurisdiction of "religion" was increasingly focused on the individual conscience, this

[2] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*; ibid.

did not signal the acceptance of a worldview in which Islam was separated from mass politics. Rather, Islam and Arabism could work hand in hand as mutually reinforcing foundations of political engagement.

The notion that religious education was historically linked to either otherworldly concerns (and thus, political indifference) or to instilling a sense of respect for religious functionaries (who presumably knew best) requires some attention here. As was noted in Chapter One, pre-modern Islamic education was more often than not associated with the conservation of the social order, functioning as "a pillar of *stability* rather than as a force for *change*" (original emphasis).[3] This cannot, however, be conflated with the idea that religious schools were not concerned with political matters, and not merely because religious scholars and institutions historically assumed a wide variety of orientations toward the public sphere. More crucially, asking whether pre-modern Islamic education was "political" in nature elides the relatively recent formation of "politics" as a discrete sphere of human activity, the rise of which was coterminous with national "state space" – including not only the nation-state's ventures into mass education, public health and management of the economy, but the emergence of the public space as the privileged site of mass politics.[4] With these considerations in mind, the question as

[3] Berkey, "Madrasas Medieval and Modern: Politics, Education, and the Problem of Muslim Identity," 46.

[4] On the related emergence of "politics" and "economy" as sites of state management and social action, see Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). ———, "Rethinking Economy," *Geoforum* 39, no. 3 (2008). On the concept of modern state space, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991). Manu Goswami is one author who has productively modified Lefebvre's theory to explain the ways in which "colonial state space" was produced. See Manu Goswami, *Producing India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004).

to whether pre-modern forms of religious education were "political" in nature is akin to asking whether medieval theologians were hostile to socialized medicine.

The reality is that Modernity engendered new forms of political engagement whose relationship with education and religious knowledge had to be formulated, not merely rearticulated. It is the details of that relationship, and the manner in which it was contested between Palestinian and British educators, that requires our attention. We should not, therefore, imagine this as a battle between a traditional Islamic approach and a modern colonial one. Both positions, in fact, forwarded views regarding religious education and its relationship to political action that were *necessarily* novel, connected as they were to the historically contingent forces of mass politics, state bureaucracies and new forms of intellectual authority.

Understanding these discursive currents requires a close analysis of curricula used in politically opposed educational spaces: the Arab Public System, managed directly by the Mandatory government, and the national schools created by Palestinian leaders. The following comparison will challenge the extent to which we should view these schools as oppositional in terms of either curricula or political function. In fact, both systems were intimately involved in "politics" of one kind or another, as the Government's insistence on the political neutrality of education represented a very real form of colonial politics. Rather, it was the *nature* of this political activity—and whether it was recognized as "political" at all—that became subject to dispute.

And Never the Twain Shall Meet

Humphrey Bowman, a product of Eton and Oxford, tellingly included the following quote from Plato's *Laws* as a preface to his Palestine memoir: "We are not speaking of education in this narrower sense, but of that other education in virtue from youth upwards, which makes a man eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship, and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey."[5] Bowman saw no contradiction in stressing the virtues of citizenship to a population thoroughly subjected to colonial rule and earnestly tried to instill in teachers the value of public service. Writing in his diary in 1929, he stated, "'public service' is what I preach everywhere now, and though it does not meet with much response, I believe gradually the people must realize that the leaders must do something for their own youth, for the blind, for the infirm, for the halfwitted. They expect government to do everything and of course government can't. Partly because there is not the money and partly because, chiefly because, there are some things which are so much better done by private… enterprise."[6] Noting this tendency to separate "the concepts of citizenship and character from their cultural base," Ylana Miller has argued that British officials "sought to use education…to maintain a stable social order and to transmit what seemed to them universal values," thereby immunizing "the population against nationalist emotions."[7]

Nevertheless, colonial administrators went to great lengths to distinguish *their* project—dictated by pedagogic necessity, managed through benign administrative channels, devoted to character formation—from education as a form of social engineering.

[5] Bowman, *Middle-East Window*: 249.
[6] Humphrey Bowman, diary entry dated April 7, 1929. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 3B.
[7] Miller, *Government and Society in Rural Palestine 1920-1948*: 97.

This had the discursive effect of separating educational concerns from political ones (or rather, of rendering colonial politics invisible) and correspondingly, education officials viewed the entrance of national politics into the classroom with great anxiety. This unease peaked at times of domestic upheaval, such as the school strikes that accompanied Lord Balfour's 1925 visit, and during the riots in 1929.[8] In Bowman's words, "As the political situation gradually worsened, we were faced by another danger. This was the effect of politics on teachers and pupils. In the neighboring Egypt, school strikes and demonstrations had had a disastrous effect on discipline, and had seriously reacted on educational progress. Once this virus entered the schools of Palestine, I knew we were doomed."[9]

Indeed, the contemporary upheaval in Egypt—a "Frankenstein monster raised by Zaghlul"[10]—weighed heavily on officials in Palestine. An editorial clipping from *The Times* preserved in Humphrey Bowman's personal papers explicitly referenced the Egyptian revolution as a cautionary tale and implored the Mandatory Government to take all possible measures to prevent the unnatural intrusion of politics into the classroom. "In fairness alike to national safety and to the education of the young Arab it is absolutely essential that the first sign of political propaganda in the schools of Palestine should be checked without a moment's delay." As the editorial warned:

> It was through his trained choruses of excited schoolboys (paid so many piastres for each demonstration) that Zaghlul taught his parrot-cries to the Egyptian people; it was from the student class that the agents were recruited to carry out the crimes

[8] For an extended discussion of school strikes, see Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: Chp. 7. For a discussion of the 1925 strike within the Government Arab College, see: Rochelle Davis, "Commemorating Education: Recollections of the Arab College in Jerusalem, 1918-1948," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, no. 1-2 (2003).
[9] Bowman, *Middle-East Window*: 310.
[10] Ibid., 311.

> inspired by the Wafd. In fact, the authorized introduction of politics into Cairo schools—to the utter neglect of proper study and the systemic insulting of the British teacher—has had the disastrous effect on the peace of the country as it has had on the education of its children.
>
> So far the schools in Palestine have been fortunate in their freedom from such interference by the Arab leaders…But there is a distinct tendency on the part of the Arab leaders to-day to follow the example of Egyptian agitators. It must be remembered that the Arab is not naturally a politician either by nature or by inclination, and the original leaders of the protest against the Zionist policy, weary of continued strife, are gradually drifting back to their daily tasks in the field.[11]

The editorial reflects a number of conceptual frameworks that were broadly accepted in British colonial circles. First, the argument that the Arab is fundamentally not a political creature, but one suited to "daily tasks in the field," found its corollary in attempts to design the school curriculum around a "rural bias," which was seen as a necessary corrective to the "literary education" that had proven so disastrous in India. Second, the presence of politics in the classroom is here formulated as an unnatural intrusion, just as unnatural as the phenomenon of the Arab meddling in politics. Thus it is to the great fortune of the Palestinian schools that they have been free from "such interference." Finally, the censorship of the press and other means developed to combat the seepage of politics into the schoolhouse are not presented as political actions in and of themselves, but as necessities dictated by pedagogic responsibility and an overarching concern for children's wellbeing. Situated at the end of a long learning curve that arced around India and Egypt before passing through Palestine, educators of Bowman's vintage diligently studied these lessons from the past (and present) in seeking to develop a school system that focused on practical training and tried to detach civic responsibility from political agitation.[12]

---

[11] "Following a Bad Example," *The Times* March 20, 1925.

[12] In his chapters regarding the historical background of Egyptian religious education, Starrett notes both the weight of the Indian example on the development of education policy in Egypt, and the fact that the results of colonial education projects were often at odds with their stated aims. The

Educational policies in Palestine were therefore cast as an improvement on both the Indian and Egyptian models: moral education that was practically directed toward the village economy.

Interestingly, Bowman characterized his attempt to shield the Department of Education from politics, "in so far as this was humanly possible," as largely successful up until the outbreak of the Arab revolt. He attributed this success in part to the Department's contacts with Hajj Amin al-Husseini and other Muslim leaders. "We never tired of stressing the disastrous results on character and upbringing of political agitation in the schools."[13] On a related front, Bowman's successor, Jerome Farrell, attributed the government's success in combating "a violent nationalism" within the Arab Public System to the Department's "directing the syllabus in accordance with true pedagogic values rather than by the demands of an artificial and hysterical racial pride." Although Arabic was the language of instruction and the curriculum even devoted some attention to the Arab *nahḍa*, "the aim has been the formation of individual character," rather than the creation of budding Arab nationalists.[14]

More strident measures were also adopted alongside private exhortations and monitoring of schools' curricula. Following the 1925 school strikes, the Government forbade teachers in the Arab Public System from membership in any political organizations and required teachers to sign the following oath:

---

introduction of modern forms of discipline and associated technologies of rule meant to neutralize the threat of lower classes could also facilitate revolt. "If schools, universities, the press, and the military barracks act as centers of revolt, it is because the spread of their unique disciplinary practices across the whole of society is accompanied by the spread of the distinctly new techniques and potentials for revolt associated with them." Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*: 58.

[13] Bowman, *Middle-East Window*: 311.

[14] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. TNA, CO/733/476/2. Section 21.

> I, _____ hereby give a solemn undertaking that so long as I am a teacher under the Department of Education I will not introduce any political considerations into my duties as a teacher, nor will I take any active part in any movement or in any meeting or demonstration which has a political character or purpose, or engage in any form of political propaganda.[15]

While teachers were no longer free to belong to popular Muslim-Christian Associations, they were still able to belong to the presumably neutral Y.M.C.A.[16] This was but one instance in which English, and more broadly, Christian, organizations were regarded as disinterested parties in the unraveling of Palestine.

However futile the attempts to prevent "politics" from entering the classroom would eventually prove,[17] for many years officials maintained faith that the right curriculum could help neutralize the threat. An exchange between High Commissioner Wauchope and Susan Lawrence, a British Parliament member, is instructive. Following a visit to Arab public schools in Palestine, Lawrence expressed a mixture of admiration and alarm at what she had witnessed:

> I cannot tell you how impressed and touched I was that the first demand of these bitterly poor people was for education. I don't believe that any European peasants would have done the same.
>
> But when I have talked to my Jewish friends, I find they look on the Arab schools with a great deal of alarm. They say that they teach race-hatred and that the teachers everywhere are the very centre of the agitation against them.
> I mention this – for if it is true – it would be comparatively easy for you by means of private or public utterances to your inspectors, the training schools, or the teachers to impress upon these servants of the Government the correct view that the schools must take no part in current politics.[18]

---

[15] "Undertaking to be signed by Teachers." May 1925. TNA, CO 814/3.
[16] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 184.
[17] Tibawi is quite unequivocal in arguing that, despite all regulations to the contrary, schools in the Arab Public System inevitably became sites for inculcating a sense of Palestinian identity and Arab nationalism. See: ibid., 195-203. Similarly the Palestine Royal Commission lamented that schools in the Arab Public System had become "hothouses for nationalism." See: Palestine Royal Commission, "Summary of Report," (London1937), 339-40.
[18] Susan Lawrence to Arthur Wauchope, undated (May/June 1935). TNA, CO 733/273/5.

In his response, the High Commissioner assured MP Lawrence that a combination of suitable textbooks and detailed syllabi were effective barriers against the politicization of schools. For potentially contentious subjects such as history, for which no textbook "in Arabic suitable for pupils in Palestine schools at present exists," the detailed nature of the syllabus ensured that this absence was "not necessarily an encouragement to undesirable propaganda by teachers." To the contrary, "the syllabus for history, as for all other subjects, is clearly laid down by the Department, and may not be altered by the teacher, whose notes of lessons are always available to the Head of his school and to Inspectors."[19]

That the teaching of modern Palestinian history was viewed as potentially seditious is clear enough. The Department of Education vetoed numerous texts by Arab authors for political reasons, with the result that no textbooks for these subjects were used for most of the Mandate period. Only in the early 1940s, and through an agreement with a "well-known publisher in England," did the government take steps to procure textbooks. The publisher agreed to "send writers to Palestine to produce suitable text-books in consultation with the department [of education]." Books would then be "translated locally," apparently the only step in the production of history texts that could be entrusted to those whose history was being written! Commenting on this development, the Advisory Committee for Education in the Colonies noted, "until these books become available for pupils the teaching of history and geography in the whole Arab system must remain largely ineffective."[20]

On one hand, the absence of textbooks for history and geography reflected the Department of Education's difficulty in producing a historical record freed from the very

[19] A.G. Wauchope to Susan Lawrence, undated (May/June 1935). TNA, CO 733/273/5.
[20] Advisory Committee for Education in the Colonies, Palestine Sub-Committee, undated draft chapter ("Chapter VI: Education"), probably 1940. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection. Box 2, File 2, Section 28.

political concerns it sought to exclude from the classroom. Yet, on the other hand, the lack of a uniform textbook may have allowed teachers even greater freedom in adding their own interpretations of historical events and personalities included in the official syllabus. As Tibawi claimed, all restrictions placed on teachers eventually proved ineffective. Teachers of "even modest cultural attainments" were "so fired by the claims of nationalism that they found no difficulty in circumventing the restrictions in the classroom."[21]

Toward the end of his tenure in Palestine in 1936, Humphrey Bowman seemed to finally accept that his efforts to exclude "politics" from the classroom through regulations and censorship were in vain. In this sense, his testimony before the Palestine Royal Commission can be read as an admission of failure. One member of the PRC commission inquired whether, "In the Arab schools at any stage have they been taught anything at all about the surrounding Arab countries, their development in the sense of their having self-government, which would have the effect of stirring up pan-Arabism?" Bowman responded, resigned at last to the futility of his efforts, "I do not think anything in the schools has made any difference in that way…because they all know it from their mother's milk."[22]

In contrast to the dreaded creep of "politics" into the classroom, administrators hoped that religious education could establish the foundation for shared moral principles that were aloof from the contemporary political turmoil. In the words of Jerome Farrell, the Director of Education for the second half of the Mandate period, "Religion is a full subject in the curriculum and thus the ultimate basis of ethical values in the Government schools is

---

[21] Abdul Latif Tibawi, "Educational Policy and Arab Nationalism in Mandatory Palestine," *Die Welt des Islams* 4, no. 1 (1955): 18.

[22] "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936." An extended transcript of Bowman's testimony, including that from the Commission's private sessions, can be found in his personal papers. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection. Box 2, File 2.

common to Islam and to Christianity." [23] This is not to say that educators found the existing systems of religious education, particularly among the Muslim population, as worthy of preservation. The goal was rather to reconstitute existing forms of religious education to accommodate the contradictory demands that schooling both nurture the "traditional" order and support the introduction of new technical skills geared for Palestine's changing economy.

The "new" Arab public schools therefore reflected an ambivalent relationship with existing institutions of religious education. Rural schools in particular were anchored by subjects that were commonly found in the *katātīb* they were meant to supersede: namely, Arabic, religious instruction, and Arithmetic.[24] However, there was much about customary forms of Islamic schooling that were deemed archaic, misdirected or pedagogically unsound. The *katātīb* were therefore a favorite target of colonial administrators and Palestinians alike. The Department of Education characterized these schools as "old-fashioned and often inefficient" institutions in which "the standard in most remains rather low." [25] Anecdotal evidence suggests that Palestinian Arabs were similarly dissatisfied with the state of rural schooling, and particularly with the village teacher. Even before the First World War, letters in the burgeoning national press lamented that the village teacher was

[23] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. CO/733/476/2. TNA, CO 733/476/2. Section 22.
[24] The matter was further complicated by the fact that many "new" public schools were actually *katātīb* that had been absorbed into the Government system through the extension of grants-in-aid. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 27.
[25] This characterization of *katātīb* remained consistent in the Department of Education's Annual Reports throughout the Mandate period. Compare, for instance, Government of Palestine Department of Education. *Annual Report,* 1925-26, 1940-41 and 1945-46.

"more ignorant than Hubnaqa," and "the germ of every evil and the source of all corruption."[26]

One way of differentiating new village schools from their former selves came in the manner in which "traditional" subjects were taught. The new directives shied away from memorization, which was thought to come at the expense of true comprehension, and instead aimed to develop the child's "facility for and a habit of rapid silent reading."[27] Oral recitation and memorization were to be used only sparingly in teaching religious subjects, and expunged from all other parts of the new curriculum.

Additionally, the subjects learned in the *kuttāb* were seemingly devoid of practical application and indeed, an over-exposure to religious texts was thought to produce children who were alienated from the necessities of village life. The Palestinian educator, Khalil Totah, offered the anecdote of overhearing a peasant exclaim, "What! Do you expect my son to work—he can read!" Echoing the viewpoint of the British administrators, Totah identified this alleged distaste for "practical education" to be at "the crux of the educational problem in the Holy Land, where education, elementary as it is, seems incompatible with manual work."[28] Without addressing the agricultural basis of village life, the customary curriculum would do nothing to remedy the economic hardship that propelled urban drift.

---

[26] Suleiman Beidas, "Al-ta'lim fi al-Qurah," *Filistin*, 16 Tamuz 1911 The figure of Hubnaqa is allegedly based on the example of Yazid ben Thurwan, and has for centuries served as a model for foolishness and stupidity. The medieval writer, Ibn al-Jawzi, immortalized the figure of Hubnaqa and his follies by featuring him in his *Akhbar al-hamqa wa al-mughallafin* [Annals of fools and the uncivilized (literally, uncircumcised)].

[27] Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Elementary School Syllabus*, Revised Edition ed. (Jerusalem 1925), 10.

[28] Totah, "Education in Palestine," 165.

Thus, to the usual subjects were added geography, nature study, history, hygiene, drawing, and agricultural and manual work.[29]

However, the introduction of new subjects into the curriculum was arguably less significant than the divisions created between existing types of knowledge. The syllabus in fact reflected an effort to remove "religion" from sites it formerly seemed to subsume: among them were the Arabic language, the historical record and the human body. One consequence of this contraction of "religious" topics was that it largely freed religious education from matters concerning material relations or the political order. Such instruction could therefore be reconstituted as the basis of a "universal" code of individual ethics. To understand this shift, and the tensions it generated, we must look not merely at the government curriculum for religious instruction, but what was newly *excluded* from the category of religion itself.

The Government of Palestine's official syllabus for town and village schools, based largely on the Egyptian model, was first published in 1921. It included detailed instructions regarding the number of hours devoted to each subject in each grade, the topics to be covered therein, and additional directions to teachers regarding the proper conduct of students. For instance, "During the intervals between classes, boys should be encouraged to run about as much as possible, or take part in easily-organised games. **Books should not be taken into the playground**" [original emphasis].[30]

---

[29] Government of Palestine Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," (Jerusalem 1921), 6. On the mixed record of the DOE in implementing agricultural training in schools, see Miller, *Government and Society in Rural Palestine 1920-1948*: 108-12.; and Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 235-38.

[30] Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 6.

The Arabic language, which had historically been a core subject of study within the *kuttāb* and *madrasa* (and indeed, many of the great treatises on the Arabic language were published by Muslim theologians), was now treated as distinct subject that aimed at the attainment of permanent literacy.[31] Further departing from the traditional order of the *kuttāb*, the 1925 version of the syllabus stated that the aim of Arabic language instruction was to develop interest in classical and modern Arabic literature. Memorization was to be avoided, and "vulgarisms and provincialisms in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary must be carefully eradicated."[32] Interestingly, memorization was allowed within the context of religious education, but "vulgarisms" were similarly discouraged: thus "the Qur'an should be memorized perfectly and read with the intonation practiced by the early Moslems," a feat which required that "the affected method of reading the Qur'an followed in the old maktabs [*katātīb*] should be discarded."[33] In this instance, modernization came to depend precisely on abandoning contemporary practices in favor of reconstructed—and supposedly more authentic—classical models.

The revival of the Arab national spirit had been a familiar trope in British intellectual circles, and the purging of "correct" Arabic of its colloquial corruptions was a natural extension of this narrative.[34] This argument was not merely a colonial creation, but rather formed a crucial component of the Arab *nahḍa*, in which intellectuals scorned Arabic

[31] The acquisition of permanent literacy was a primary goal of the Department of Education. See, for example, "Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936."
[32] ———, *Elementary School Syllabus*: 8-9.
[33] ———, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 32.
[34] In a similar vein, advocates of Islamic revival argued that the return of the caliphate to Arab hands was crucial to restoring Islam's former grandeur. See, for example, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London: Paul, 1882).

dialects and demanded that the new Arabic literature be produced in *fuṣḥa*.[35] In effect, the government syllabus seems to have echoed attempts by contemporary Arab intellectuals to construct a national-linguistic heritage that predated, and was distinct from, an Islamic religious context. That this emphasis on Arabic as the carrier of national identity was not deemed incompatible with the effort to keep national politics at bay points again at the colonial attempt to demarcate appropriate educational goals (instilling a "healthy national feeling") from inappropriate ones ("hysterical racial pride").

Continuing our discussion of the curricular distinctions reflected in the syllabus, Hygiene represents a subject that could have quite easily been subsumed under the category of religious education. Indeed, children did study "practical knowledge of the principles of ablutions" as part of the class dedicated to Islamic religious instruction.[36] However, in treating hygiene as a distinct component of the syllabus, the curriculum indicated that these practices were not to be regarded as part of a particular religious ritual, but rather, as universal norms grounded in scientific objectivity. The inclusion of hygiene as a school subject also reflected the larger trend whereby everyday rural activities were transformed into forms of knowledge that were only acquired by removing the child from the home in which they were usually learned. This was true not merely of hygiene, but also of poultry keeping, agricultural work, or embroidery (in girls' schools)—skills with which no child in rural Palestine was truly unfamiliar. As I argued in Chapter Two, the

[35] For example, after the publication of *Zaynab* in 1913, widely considered the first modern Arabic novel, Taha Hussein lamented its use of colloquial Arabic for dialogue, noting that the colloquial was not "a suitable instrument for mutual understanding and a method for realizing the various goals of our intellectual life." Quoted in Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: an historical and critical introduction* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1982), 35.
[36] Department of Education, *Elementary School Syllabus*: 72.

result was an educational paradigm in which corrupt village conditions were thought to necessitate the academic training of children in an idealized "traditional" life.

However noteworthy were these curricular innovations, it is by comparing syllabi for Islamic religious instruction on one hand, and history on the other, that the approach to religion as a distinct category of personal experience becomes most apparent. In this sense, the curriculum offers a rich site for analyzing, in Talal Asad's words, ""How, when, and by whom are the categories of religion and the secular defined" and "What assumptions are presupposed in the acts that define them?"[37] It is to these questions that we now turn.

Boundary Making: On secular time and sacred virtues

Emerging against the backdrop of the *kuttāb* and its undifferentiated curriculum in which reading, writing and tales from the past were inseparable parts of learning the Qur'an, the Arab Public System claimed to offer a new and improved form of education. As I have argued, in addition to introducing new topics—say, Themistocles and the battles of Artemisium and Salamis in the history curriculum—the syllabus repackaged existing forms of knowledge into new categories, and expanded the realm of subject matter to include "practical" knowledge that was formerly acquired through everyday living.

As numerous authors have noted, the teaching of history and geography in Arab public schools constituted a continual source of tension between the Department of Education and the Palestinian Arab public. Palestinian nationalists regarded the government curriculum as a classic colonial attempt to obviate the identity formation of the Arab child by turning his attention to foreign events while simultaneously neglecting the

[37] Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*: 201.

history of modern Palestine.[38] There is certainly an element of truth to this claim, though it does not fully capture the matrix within which these curricular decisions operated, how the boundaries between sacred and secular events were established, and what significance was attached to each.

The general structure of the new history curriculum narrated a teleological story at whose apex sat European modernity, its commercial triumphs, scientific advancements and political conquests. Thus the child may study figures from the Arab past in classes devoted to ancient or medieval history, but modernity as a historical period was reserved almost exclusively for European (and, to a lesser extent, North American) developments. The second class, for instance, included the following topics under the heading of "modern history:" Columbus; Drake, his voyage round the world; Cromwell and the struggle between King and Parliament; Watt Stephenson and the invention of the steam engine; William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery in British domains; Napoleon; Nelson, the battle of the Nile; Gordon, and the suppression of the slave trade in the Sudan.[39] To the extent that lands outside of the Euro-American context appeared, it was as objects of colonial conquest and, as the Sudanese example above suggests, improvement.

Yet, as indicated above, the curriculum was not totally bereft of Arab historical figures or events. For instance, teachers were given a list of "great men" whose biographies formed the basis of lessons, particularly in the lower grades. They included "the principal characters in Bible history," Socrates, Josephus, the rightly guided Caliphs, 'Abd al-Malik ibn

[38] According to Tibawi's account, Arab nationalists never ceased to point out that the History syllabus "insisted in its content and tone on the international rather than the national character of Palestine." Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 88. More recently, Rashid Khalidi has pointed to this fact (and the educational structure as a whole) as being partially responsible for the lack of Palestinian state formation during the Mandate period and in the years following. See: Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*.
[39] *Elementary school syllabus*, Rev. ed. (Jerusalem, 1925), 37.

al-Marwan, Harun al-Rashid, Charlemagne, al-Ghazali, Richard the Lionheart, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, Christopher Columbus, Napoleon and Ibrahim Pasha, to give only a very small sampling.[40] There are two questions we must therefore address: first, if Arab history was not actually excluded to the extent that has been suggested, what topics were fit for inclusion and why? Second, how did caliphs and jurists come to be included in "secular" history rather than within religious instruction, and what were the interpretive consequences of this shift?

On one hand, the figures and events deemed worthy of inclusion function as milestones within an unbroken chain of Arab national heritage extending back to pre-Islamic times: the *Jahaliya* poets Hatim al-Ta'i and 'Amr ibn Madi Karib initiate a chronology that includes the rightly guided caliphs, great military heroes (Khalid ibn al-Walid, Tariq ibn Ziyad, Jawhar al-Siqilli, Salah al-Din), renowned artists and scholars (al-Shafi'i, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, al-Mutanabbi), and culminates in 19th century reformers (Muhammad 'Ali, Ibrahim Pasha, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri). This was by now a familiar narrative, one that found its first modern articulation in the writings of figures associated with the Arab *nahḍa* before its adoption by Arab nationalist thinkers. It is therefore not surprising to find a similar version of this chronology within history textbooks written by Palestinian nationalist educators, such as those by Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza.[41]

---

[40] Department of Education, *Elementary School Syllabus*: 30-37. As this list suggests, the syllabus was entirely devoid of great women, though this was interestingly not the case in curricular materials prepared by 'Izzat Darwaza, who I discuss later in this chapter. His Arab history textbook included a discussion of Khula bint al-Azwar, who led a group of women in the battle of Yarmouk, and invited students to compare her heroic deeds with the lowly condition of Muslim women in their day. Darwaza, *durūs al-tārikh al-'arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* 95.

[41] See, for example, ———, *durūs al-tārikh al-'arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* Darwaza served as principal of the Najah school in Nablus from 1922-1927. He was later one of the founding members of the Istiqlal nationalist party. For more on Darwaza's political activities, see Weldon C.

Thus, it is not that Arab history was entirely neglected. On the contrary, figures from the Arab classical heritage commanded a great deal of attention. What was neglected, however, was contemporary Arab history as seen from the perspective of national revival, foreign betrayal and colonial conquest. For instance, while the government syllabus and ʻIzzat Darwaza's nationalist textbook both concluded with lessons on "The Great War and its results in the Arab land" ("*al-ḥarb al-kubra wa atharuha fi al-bilād al-ʻarabiya*" in Darwaza's text, suggesting a rather literal mirroring of the government curriculum), the content of those lessons were quite different. Nonetheless, the topical similarities between these two, allegedly oppositional, history curricula gesture at one of the great contradictions of the Mandatory government's educational planning: students were expected to gain the literary skills required to appreciate classical and modern Arabic literature, and to deduce moral lessons from the great military and political heroes of the Arab past, but were to avoid relating to this knowledge as a source of inspiration for their modern political identities.

As indicated by the list of "great men" above, the child's first introduction to history was a mixed one in many ways. It included both Arab and foreign figures, taken from both sacred and secular settings. Here Biblical figures could inhabit the same historical space as al-Shafiʻi and King Alfred. It was not merely figures from the Judeo-Christian tradition that found their way into the syllabus, as intermediate classes covered the family of Muhammad, "his mission and life in detail," the spread of Islam and the decay of the Caliphate.[42] This removal of characters and events from the annals of sacred history can be

---

Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris 2006).

[42] Department of Education, *Elementary School Syllabus*: 40-41.

read as an attempt to naturalize the historical record, wherein the rapid spread of Islam, for example, is attributable to the "organisation of the Arab Empire" and its "fiscal system," rather than divine providence.[43] Similarly, lessons should stress "the effect of climate, physical conditions, means of communications, and environment on the development of the different races."[44] What is evident from this example is the fragmentation of Islamic history into discrete ethical and political components, to be dealt with in the contexts of religious instruction and secular history, respectively. As such, the history curriculum posited a new interpretive framework for explaining familiar episodes from the human past. What occurred within the "old-fashioned" *kuttāb*, on the other hand, was not genuine history, perhaps less on account of *what* was studied than because of how the march of time was encountered and explained.

With overtly "religious" leaders relegated to the ancient and medieval periods, and naturalistic explanations provided even to explain even the most theologically charged events, historical time is doubly purged of the political-theological mingling that European modernity deemed unacceptable. Following Latour, we might characterize this as an act of "purification" that distinguishes secular and sacred discourses of the past, while, we might suspect, at the same time facilitating the violation of that very same boundary.[45] Yet we should not conflate the creation of this new discursive framework with a broader attempt to promote secularism as an ideological framework. On the contrary, religious institutional

[43] *Elementary school syllabus*: 40.
[44] ———, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 16.
[45] Latour, *We have never been modern*. For an analysis of historical positivism and its theological points of reference, see: Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

networks and interpretive structures still had much work to do in Palestine. A closer look at the syllabus for religious instruction will help illustrate this argument.

Within rural schools, "Mohammedan" (in the 1921 syllabus) or "Moslem Religious Instruction" (in the revised 1925 version) commanded a relatively large share of the weekly school hours, topped only by the extensive time spent on the Arabic language.[46] In order to assuage the Muslim population "that the importance they always attached to the moral and religious basis of education was not to be neglected," the curriculum for religious education was created by a "classical scholar of well-established reputation in the Arab world."[47] This scholar was most likely Sheikh Hussam al-Din Jarallah, who tied in the election for Grand Mufti before the British enshrined Hajj Amin al-Husseini in the position.[48] Jarallah held a number of official posts beginning under the military government in 1917. He served as the chief clerk for the *shari'a* courts, a district inspector for the Department of Education, and was even seconded to Trans-Jordan to assume a position as the Minister of Justice in 1926. He later returned to Palestine where he continued to hold positions within the *shari'a* courts and served as a member of the *awqaf* commission.[49] Following the Jordanian occupation in 1948, King Abdullah appointed Sheikh Jarallah as Chief Qadi and Mufti of Jerusalem, supplanting his long-time rival.

---

[46] In the first two grades, students spent five hours a week on religious instruction, five hours on arithmetic, and a whopping 14 hours on Arabic, out of a total 30 hours in school each week. In grades 3 and 4, religious instruction commanded four hours, which was further reduced to thee hours in the final two years. Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 6.

[47] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 149.

[48] See "Hassam al-Din Jarallah" in Hamada, *A'lām filasṭīn min al-qurn al-awal hata al-khāmis 'ashar*: 133-34. On the elections to chose the Grand Mufti, see: Al-Hout, *al-qiyādāt wa al-mu'assassāt al-siyāsiya fi filasṭīn 1917-1948*: 203-05.

[49] *Government of Palestine Civil Service List 1939*, Revised to 1st January 1939. Alexandria, Whitehead Morris Limited 1939.

Jarallah was a modernist scholar and former student of Muhammad ‘Abduh. While no writings of Jarallah’s have been published, we can glean some information about his views from an interview with his daughter, Sa‘ida.[50] She remembers her father as a progressive figure among Palestine’s *‘ulema* who believed strongly in the education of women. He sent Sa‘ida to Schmidt’s College, despite the fact that it was a Catholic institution, and then to the Women’s Training College. In 1938-1939, he sent her—alone—to continue her studies in England, a decision that apparently generated no small share of controversy. Further stressing her father’s progressive credentials, Sa‘ida recounted the following anecdote that occurred following the 1948 war:

> I remember one time there was a big feast and King Abdallah was attending. One of the people told the king that Shaykh Hussam teaches his daughters how to play the piano and sends his daughters to foreign schools. My father stood in front of the king and cited some of the Prophet's sayings about education and culture in front of everybody. He told him that the prophet said "you should pursue your education even if it takes you to China"— and that education was a requirement for every Muslim man and woman. We were the first to go to Zion (shorthand for Dames de Sion, a girls' school) in a boarding school and the first to learn to play the piano. This was very difficult sixty or seventy years ago. Muslims were very strict those days.[51]

Even if Sheikh Jarallah was not the “classical scholar” referred to in Tibawi’s account, we can nonetheless detect numerous traces of Islamic modernism in the curriculum that are reminiscent of reforms proposed in Muhammad ‘Abduh’s letter to the *Sheikh al-Islam*, analyzed in Chapter 1. In addition to the shift away from memorization, the curriculum stressed uniformity in religious studies, the linkage of ritual practice to symbolic meaning, and the primacy of the Qur’an as a source for religious guidance.

---

[50] Ellen Fleischmann interviewed Sa’ida Jarallah in 1994 while researching the Palestinian women’s movement. The complete transcript is available online at http://homepages.udayton.edu/~fleischm/jarallah.htm.
[51] Ibid.

Given the popularity of "Protestant" approaches to Islam within reformist circles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it should serve as no surprise that the Qur'an served as the center of religious education in government schools. "The Qur'an should be the source of authority in deducing doctrines, ritual, moral axioms, and civil transactions."[52] The Qur'an and *sunna* functioned as the vessels for the transmission of these virtues, as it was through the moral exemplars contained therein that the child acquired "fear of his maker in all his religious and worldly (*dunyawiya*) acts."[53] Furthermore, the first goal of religious instruction (*al-diyana* or *al-ta'līm al-dīnī*) was "the propagation of superior moral virtues by means of example and good lesson" (*al-'abra wa al-mu'atha al-hasana*).[54] This passage suggests, and the following analysis will substantiate, that Mandatory officials promoted religious education as a means of character formation that was not dissimilar to contemporary British views of education at home. And indeed, taking into consideration Jonathan Sheehan's excellent study of approaches to the Bible in late 19th century England, it is not altogether surprising that British administrators in early 20th century Palestine would regard religious education as a means of diffusing "universal" ethical and civil values rather than an integral component of material life or a means to secure individual salvation.[55]

---

[52] Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 32.
[53] Mininstry of Public Education, "*Irshādāt al-'amaliya*," (Cairo: Royal Printing Press (al-mutba' al-amiriya), 1920), 15.
[54] Ibid., 17. Like other curricular and pedagogical materials, this text was borrowed from the Egyptian education system, however it remained in use even after the original Palestinian syllabus (based on the Egyptian model) was revised. Thus the 1925 Elementary School Syllabus specifies that "the teacher of Quran and Moslem Religious Instruction should read carefully pages 15 and 17 of the '*Irshadatu 'l 'Amalieh*' on the teaching of Quran and Moslem Religion." See: Department of Education, *Elementary School Syllabus*: 71.
[55] Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005), Chp. 9.

The syllabus further divided its contents into two segments: "Qur'an" and "Religious Instruction." The former consisted of an ordered timetable for reading the Qur'an in its entirety by the end of the final year of schooling, prescribing which *ajza'* should be read and which committed to memory. The creation of a large network of public schools in which each child learned the same portion of the Qur'an at the same time must itself be appreciated as a novelty. As such, the incorporation of religious education into the school curriculum was not the mere continuation of the past but a significant attempt to create a uniform approach to the Qur'an's teaching and interpretation. In the same vein, the introduction of an official textbook for the upper grades reflected the urge to ensure teachers followed a standardized curriculum. This necessarily stripped the teacher of some of the autonomy he possessed within private *katātīb*, and the development of detailed syllabi and textbooks can in fact be read as an attempt to mitigate the uneven influence of individual teachers. In this, the British did nothing that wasn't already envisioned decades earlier by Muhammad 'Abduh, who argued that only a unified approach to religious education, purged of its irrational elements, could combat the creep of *jahl* among Ottoman Muslims.[56]

In addition to stipulating which Qur'anic passages the child would read and memorize each year, the syllabus reflected a long-standing European anxiety that the practice of memorization left the child bereft of true comprehension. This concern was not a mere pedagogic one, but rather emerged from the idea that a religious text must contain some ethical core that is distinct from the ritual practices and performances that surround

[56] 'Abduh, "lā'iḥa iṣlāḥ al-ta'līm al-'othmānī."

it.[57] This understanding no doubt emerged from approaches to religious education in 19th century Britain, where reformers insisted that, in the words of Gregory Starrett, "true moral instruction lay in the study and understanding of 'lessons' drawn from Scripture. The text itself, aside from refining literary taste, was secondary to the conveyance of such lessons."[58] Therefore, teachers were to give "the meaning of difficult words and a resume of the general sense" of each *juz'* that was memorized. Furthermore, "the verses selected for the various years of study should be explained so that they may become firmly rooted in the minds of the pupils who should be led to act in keeping with the principles and precepts embodied therein."[59] As Brinkley Messick has argued in the context of Yemen, this emphasis on understanding the ethical content of the Qur'an overturned older modes of relating to the text's divinity as something to be embodied through recitation.[60] As such, it was not merely that memorization was deemed pedagogically unsound, but that it compromised the modern project of relating to the Qur'an as a coherent set of dogmas and ethical precepts to be absorbed by the individual conscience.

Under the heading of "Religious Instruction," lowers classes focused on the life and attributes of Muhammad, his family, migration to Medina, death and burial. These were, significantly, all topics that appeared in the history syllabus as well, though here particular stress was paid to the prophet as a moral guide, "his self-abnegation and humility," "his interest in the well-being of children," "his refraining from revenge when revenge lay in his power." Through the incorporation of "moral training"—namely "virtues whose practice is

[57] For an alternate interpretation of the functional role of memorizing the Qur'an, see Helen N. Boyle, "Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools," in *Islam and Education Myths and Truths*, ed. Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[58] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*: 38.
[59] Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 32.
[60] Brinkley Messick, *Calligraphic State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

inferred from verses in the Qur'an"—the upper grades combined the earlier emphasis on Muhammad's biography with the reformist stress on the Qur'an as the authoritative source for deducing ethical principles. These included, for instance, "respect due to parents," "obedience due to rulers" and "the etiquette of visiting."[61]

On one hand, the emulation of Muhammad's behavior as a means of moral fashioning was as old as Islamic education itself. What is interesting for our purposes is that this emphasis came at the expense of teaching the material, social or political dimensions of Islam. The curriculum thus promoted a view of religion as largely limited to the biography of Muhammad, the text of the Qur'an and the "universal moral values" that were thought to represent an ethical core shared by Christianity, and to a lesser extent, Judaism. In contrast, many Muslim "religious" thinkers and leaders appeared not within the syllabus for religious instruction, but within that for Arab history. Thus 'Abu Bakr and al-Ghazali take their place in the curriculum along other heroes of the classical Arabic tradition in much the same way that Socrates and Julius Caesar were used to symbolize the intellectual and political triumphs of the Greco-Roman period.

I would like to suggest that in this instance, secular history was linked to the nation in a way that religion, imagined as a source of universal values, could not support. Echoing the earlier transformation of the Bible into an ethical text of neo-humanistic heritage, "religion" was meant to function in Palestine as a moral common ground that could rise above the political clamor. If any degree of particularism was allowed to creep into the classroom, it was through the historical study of the great men of the past, and hence the heightened level of supervision over schools' history curricula. Prominent Muslim figures

[61] Department of Education, "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages," 34-35.

could therefore migrate from sacred to secular history as exemplars of the Arab nation, a movement that facilitated the approach to religion as a defined group of beliefs, ritual practices and ethical norms. Stripped of most of its political leaders and cultural heroes, Islamic religious instruction could thereby be reconstituted as part of a universal—or perhaps more to the point, universalizing—moral system that was largely removed from those affairs now claimed by the secular.

In concluding, it is worth reiterating that this approach to religion as a depoliticized entity was directly at odds with the actual administrative structure of Palestine, whose governance through religious units obviated the emergence of a common public space. More cynically, we might say that it was precisely *because* religion was conceived of in apolitical terms that the British chose to govern through it. We are left, however, with a bundle of contradictions that characterized the administration's approach to Arab and Islamic education: they desired secular education without secularism, national education without nationalism, religious education without sectarianism.[62]

Nor should we conflate the way the curriculum was designed with the way in which it was received. At least according to Tibawi's account, the attempt to separate Islamic religious education from its political context was at least partially undermined by the mediating role of Palestinian teachers. "Texts from the Quran or Hadith of the Prophet were expounded in such a way that the outcome might as well be presumed to come from a political treatise. Conversely, political events and current local affairs were so subtly represented in religious garb, with an irresistible appeal to the minds of the young, that

[62] The attempt to avoid fueling sectarian conflicts is also evident in the treatment of Christian religious instruction, in which teachers are expressly forbidden from using any text other than the Bible "unless the children are all of the same community." Ibid., 36.

gave the impression that the outcome was in accord with the wishes of the early caliphs or indeed of Muhammad himself."[63] While my focus has not been on the reception of the government curricula—a topic which, however difficult to assess, nonetheless is deserving of its own study—we should remain mindful of the gap that in all likelihood separated the Education Department's intentions from the ways in which the curricula was actually understood.

Intersections

It is telling that one of the first issues of the Arabic newspaper, *Filistin*, featured an editorial on the state of education in Palestine. Reflecting the hopes of the second Ottoman Constitutional era, the article drew attention to the need to transform public schools in order to train a new generation of citizens: "All that the era of despotism begat must pass with it, and as to the era of freedom, everything in it must be new." Metaphorically, the author exhorted readers to don new garments (*athwāb jadīda*) and to throw off the garb of despotism. Yet perhaps most noteworthy is that the success of this project was represented as hinging on the creation of new textbooks, without which "the nation will remain in its former state… of hypocrisy, and fraud." Indeed, it continued, "in our country we are in need of a general overhaul of [text]books to establish new books accompanied by principles of the constitutional era."[64]

[63] Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A study of three decades of British administration*: 184.
[64] "al-Madaris fi Filistin," *Filistin*, July 5, 1911.

The impulse toward creating standardized textbooks to transmit the values of an enlightened era to a new generation of citizens hints at the degree to which public education in Palestine, even in its nascent form, was understood as part and parcel of the new political order. The recognition of education's political importance only increased among Palestinian leaders following the Balfour Declaration and the British occupation, and again, textbooks proved a crucial (and contentious) factor in attempts to prepare the next generation for a new set of political challenges. This was all the more important in the face of attacks on Arab unity—either through the severance of Palestine from Greater Syria or sectarian attempts to sow dissension between Muslims and Christians—attacks that could be somewhat mitigated by the production of textbooks that would allow schoolchildren in Nablus to learn the same lessons as those in Jaffa.

Having examined the curriculum designed for use within the Arab Public System, and situated it within the administrative and ideological contexts of British colonial rule, I will now offer a comparison with the curricula and textbooks used in al-Najah, and specifically, the way in which they articulated the relationship between Islam, secular history and political action. I suggested above that there was some degree of overlap in the government curricula and textbooks created by Palestinian nationalist educators, and it is worth exploring these points of intersection in further detail and asking what, if anything, they tell us about the negotiation of "religious" and "secular" forms of knowledge. Exploring these points of convergence and rupture adds further nuance to our understanding of Arab modernists—who are too often either dismissed (or celebrated) as colonial mimics—as intellectual figures and political actors. While not an exhaustive review, this exercise is nonetheless suggestive of the epistemic paths forged by Palestinian nationalists in their

attempts to create new forms of schooling that responded to concerns regarding both cultural authenticity and social utility.

In fact, the leadership of al-Najah largely acquiesced in the Department of Education's view of religious education as concerned primarily with individual moral fashioning. It rejected, however, the notion that this separated Islam from social or political activism. Based on an analysis of curricula and textbooks, I argue that the Protestant notion of religiosity as a form of individual ethics could rather function to forge an Arab national politics that transcended supposedly age-old communal divisions. In this sense, the colonial epistemic order was not without its practical advantages. If government policy reflected both a desire to nurture religious affinities as an antidote to national politics and a tendency to conceive of religiosity in Protestant terms, the leaders of al-Najah seemed to have accepted the latter conceptualization as a *means* of political mobilization rather than a force that restrained it. Points of commonality with government curricula did not, therefore, signal the acceptance of a form of Islam divorced from political action.

Rather, we must further distinguish religion as a source of political identity from religion as a source of political inspiration. Like his contemporary Taha Hussein—whose autobiography was required reading at al-Najah by the late 1930s—Darwaza's texts embraced the idea of an Islamic civilization system that was intertwined with the fate of the Arab nation. Thus while the contraction of Islam's legal jurisdiction to personal status law and a pronounced emphasis on individual ethical formation may suggest an attempt to relegate "religion" to the private space, we should not necessarily equate these shifts with the wholesale adoption of secularism as a movement to liberate public reason and thus, political action, from religious sensibilities.

The *Nahḍa* in Nablus

We begin this analysis by taking al-Najah National School and its former headmaster, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, as a case study.[65] The school was founded in 1918 by a group of educators and intellectuals in Nablus in order to cultivate a new generation of elites poised to become future leaders, "possessing refined intellects…nurtured by useful sciences (*al-'ulum al-nāfi'a*), culture and nationalism."[66] In its curricular materials, the school emphasized both the ethical content of its instruction—paying special attention to moral fashioning as "character (*khulq*) is the basis of success in life"—and its belief in the essential unity of the Arab nation, emphasizing that its doors were open to non-Muslims as well.[67] The latter were exempted from attending lessons pertaining to Islam, and exercises in "their religious rituals" were offered in the students' own places of worship.[68]

Darwaza served as headmaster of al-Najah from 1921-1926, though he is perhaps better known for his political activities. A member of the 1920 congress of Damascus that elected Emir Faisal King of Greater Syria, and later a co-founder of the *Istiqlāl* (Independence) Party in Palestine, Darwaza was unwavering in his opposition to Zionism and the extension of Mandates over Arab territories following the Great War. He also authored numerous textbooks for use in Palestinian national schools, particularly history texts. While these books were never used in government schools because of their

---

[65] Darwaza chronicled his involvement with the school in his memoir. Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *Muthakkirat Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-gharb al-Islami, 1993), 317-18; 520-47.

[66] *Barnamaj al-Najah al-Wataniya Nablusi*, (Jerusalem: Dar al-Aytām al-Islamiya, 1939), 2. For a general history of the school, including information about its enrollment numbers, funding sources and relationship to other Palestinian bodies, see Majd Abed-al-Fatah Abdoh, "Educational Conditions in Nablus during the British Mandate (*al-ouḍā' al-ta'limiya fi nablus ibān al-intidāb al-briṭāni*)" (Al-Najah National University, 1998).

[67] *Barnamaj al-Najah al-Wataniya Nablusi*: 5.

[68] According to one report, approximately 10% of students at al-Najah were Christian in the 1926-27 school year. See ———, "Educational Conditions in Nablus during the British Mandate (*al-ouḍā' al-ta'limiya fi nablus ibān al-intidāb al-briṭāni*)," 129.

nationalist overtones, they were used extensively in al-Najah and other private schools in Palestine.[69] For instance, the 1938-39 curriculum for al-Najah featured a number of Darwaza's works, including *Lessons in Arab History from Antiquity to the Present*, *Lessons in Ancient History*, and *Lessons in Medieval and Modern History*.[70]

Reviewing the textbooks, it is immediately evident that Darwaza adopted many of the assumptions prevalent within colonial circles about the backwardness of the Arab lands and the need to adopt the tools of Western progress. For instance, his text on medieval and modern history is almost exclusively confined to European and American developments, reflecting the notion that Arab lands had not yet passed through the gates of modernity. The text begins with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and ushers students through the rise of the Anglo-Saxons, the "age of discovery", the colonization of the Americas, the Napoleonic wars and the Industrial Revolution. It concludes by addressing the student directly and highlighting the political implications of attaining material progress:

> I think that after reading this lesson you are very distressed over your country and your nation and you say to yourself that all of the inventions are in Europe and America, and that the wondrous industries are in Europe and America, that every thing that we use in terms of clothing, pots, bedding, kerosene stoves, cars, iron railways, airplanes, lamps, cars [sic], pens and paper and other (things), all of it is produced in the factories of Europe and in enormous America by means of modern methods using machines powered by steam and electricity.[71]

Modernity here functions both as a characteristic that differentiates Euro-American nations from Arab lands and that facilitates colonial domination over them. However this need not

---

[69] Darwaza's memoirs include a review of his publications and claim that his history texts were used widely not only in private schools in Palestine, but that government history teachers also depended on them in preparing their lessons. According to the memoirs, Darwaza's textbooks were also used in public schools in Jordan and Iraq. Darwaza, *Muthakkirat Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza*, 1: 19.

[70] ———, *durūs al-tārikh al-'arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* ; Muhammad 'Izaat Darwaza, *darus al-tarikh al-qadim* (al-Quds: Matb'a dar al-Aytam al-Islamiya al-Sanaa'iya, 1936). Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *durūs al-tarikh al-mutawasat wa al-hadith* (Cairo: Salafiya Press, 1930).

[71] ———, *durūs al-tarikh al-mutawasat wa al-hadith: 268.*

be the case forever, and Darwaza charges his readers to use their despair as a source of inspiration in their struggle to transform the homeland through hard work and innovation. By adopting the tools of European progress, Darwaza promises that "then your country will advance and you will exchange your sadness for joy," adding that such transformations were deeply rooted in tradition itself, "Indeed your ancient forefathers already fought hard (*ijtahada*) and were therefore successful."[72] It's noteworthy that the verb *ijtahada* means both to struggle to overcome something and, within the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, to offer an independent legal ruling. The term acquired significant symbolic weight at the turn of the twentieth century due to its revival by Muslim (Sunni) modernists, who believed the practice of *ijtihad* could facilitate a broad range of social and political changes within Islamic societies. Darwaza was no doubt capitalizing on this dual meaning when he urged his young readers to embrace the tools of European progress and use them to restore the Arab nation to its former grandeur – an act for which, as he implies, there existed the most prestigious of precedents.

The curriculum for al-Najah shared much common ground with that which was used in government schools, beginning with the privileged place given to the Arabic language. The first four classes devoted an overwhelming number of their total class hours to the study of Arabic, as the following table demonstrates:

[72] Ibid., 269.

Distribution of subjects for elementary classes[73]

Subject	1st class	2nd class	3rd class	4th class
Qur'an and Islamic Religious instruction	4	6	6	6
Arabic	16	13	10	8
English	-	-	6	7
Arithmetic	5	5	5	5
History	-	2	2	2
Geography	-	2	1	2
General instruction[74]	4	-	-	-
Object Lessons[75]	-	2	2	2
Drawing	1	1	1	1
Physical education	3	2	1	1
Weekly total	33	33	34	34

Elementary classes used two primary texts for Arabic language instruction, both of which are significant in terms of tracing the disassociation of Arabic from an Islamic milieu. The first was an Arabic primer, *al-jadīd fi qirā'a al-'arabiya* by Khalil al-Sakakini, a Christian Palestinian intellectual and educator. The second text, *qusus aṭfāl* by Kāmil Kilāni, adapted popular stories like "Hayy Ibn Yaqzan" and portions of *1001 Nights* into simple—though not colloquial—language. The choice of these texts gestures at an understanding of Arabic that was relatively novel: that is to say, its study Arabic existed independently (and indeed, was given greater weight than) from the study of the Qur'an. The fact that the a school which touted its Islamic credentials could so easily adopt an Arabic textbook by one of Palestine's foremost Christian intellectuals testifies not only to al-Sakakini's influence or al-Najah's progressive tendencies, but to a larger shift wherein the study of Arabic had become disassociated with the study of Islam – a position that would have been untenable

[73] *Barnamaj al-Najah al-Wataniya Nablusi*: 8.
[74] *al-mu'alūmāt al-'āma* was given only in the first class and consisted in leading the students in observation of plants and animals, general instruction about health and hygiene, and "geographical and historical stories."
[75] *durūs al-ashya'*

a few decades prior. Similarly, the adoption of reading primers like those created by Kāmil Kilāni reflects an effort to identify an Arabic literary heritage that was not overtly Islamic in tone, but rather could be regarded as shared national property.

The production of reading primers formed a key step in a transformation away from orality (both in terms of telling stories from memory and hearing them recited) toward a social order that privileged, as stated in the government directive quoted above, "a habit for rapid silent reading." The popularity of such primers also testifies to the spread of modern pedagogic ideas about the distinctiveness of childhood and the need to create curricular materials that catered to the child's immature sensibility. On both counts, the *kuttāb* was woefully inadequate. As I show in the following chapter, similar trends also swept through Zionist schools of the period, gesturing to a point of pedagogic overlap in what were otherwise separate school systems. Indeed, this is yet another example of how distinct educational networks were linked by certain administrative and pedagogic practices, even while their leaders accused one another of various educational and political misdeeds.

In a similar vein, much of al-Najah's curriculum for Islamic religious education mirrored that used within the Arab Public System, with religious instruction divided into two components, at least in elementary classes: a schedule for reading and memorizing the Qur'an, and instruction in matters of ritual and moral guidance. Importantly, the school adopted standardized textbooks for Islamic religious instruction, the appearance of which represented a significant development in the history of modern Islamic education. If we recall Muhammad 'Abduh's efforts to convince the Sublime Porte to issue standardized books for this purpose, we can appreciate the importance of such texts in a modernist

program geared toward a rationalized, univocal form of Islam.[76] Uniform textbooks were all the more crucial given the association of local teachers with superstitious practices and ignorance of "true" Islam. What better way to disseminate the new Orthodoxy than through standardized books tailored to the child and young adult and supervised by a central authority?

Indeed, a number of standardized texts for Islamic religious education were published in the first half of the twentieth century, not only in Palestine, but in Iraq, Egypt and Transjordan as well. Many of the textbooks were written by scholars associated with al-Azhar, some of whom were also employed in the education ministries of surrounding Arab countries. For instance, al-Najah relied on a series of books, *ṣafwat durūs al-dīn wa al-akhlāq* (Lessons of Religion and Morality), prepared by Mustafa ʻInānī and ʻIṭiyah al-Ashqar for use in Egyptian elementary schools.[77] As the preface states, in 1932 the Ministry of Public Education "saw it fit to enlighten the teaching of religion in its schools," thus the Egyptian government launched a textbook competition to solicit new publications. ʻInānī and al-Ashqar's book emerged victorious, and became the official text for elementary religious education in Egypt.

ʻAṭiyah al-Ashqar was a former public education inspector, while ʻInānī was a senior inspector for the Arabic sciences at Al-Azhar. The latter figure also authored a textbook for use in secondary schools, *kitāb al-dīn al-islamī*, along with Hasn Mansur and ʻAbd al-Wahāb

[76] In his work on writing culture in Yemen, Brinkley Messick helped pioneer an understanding of the shift from polyvocal, flexible forms of *shariʻa* to the adoption of modern, standardized legal codes whose fixity led to increasingly univocal proclamations regarding the dictates of "Islamic law". See Messick, *Calligraphic State*.
[77] Mustafa 'Ināni and 'Atiyah al-Ashqar, *ṣafwat durūs al-dīn wa al-akhlāq* (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Rahmaniya, 1932).

Khayr al-Din, both of whom were affiliated with Dar al-'Ulūm (today *Kuliya Dar al-'Ulum*). The college was established in 1872 to teach both Islamic and modern sciences, chiefly to al-Azhar graduates. After the British occupation of Egypt, the college became the de facto center for training public school teachers. Its graduates would go on to include the activists Hasan al-Bana and Sayyid Qutb, both of whom began their careers as educators. A similar series of texts, *mabādá fi al-dīn al-islamī* (Principles of the Islamic Religion) was published in Palestine in 1947, written by 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sā'iḥ, Ibrahim Mahmud Sanwir, Ahmed al-Khalifa and 'Ali Hasn 'Auda. All four men were active participants in interwar political and educational programs, boasting affiliations with al-Azhar (al-Sā'ih and 'Aūda), the Supreme Muslim Council (al-Sā'ih), Dar al-'Ulum and the Government Arab College in Jerusalem ('Aūda) and the Jordanian government, in which Sanwir held a number of official posts following 1948.

Mabādá fi al-dīn al-islamī is a six-part series designed for use in primary and lower secondary classes. The first volume notes prominently on its cover that it was designed "in accordance with the Department of Education's latest curriculum," while the second part of the series proudly announces that "the Department of Education in Palestine and the Ministry of Education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have decided to teach this book." Such pronouncements mirror that which appeared on the cover of *ṣafwat durūs al-dīn wa al-akhlāq*, which stated, "The Ministry of Public Education (Egypt) has chosen to use this book in its schools." Given the British colonial presence that existed in all three countries, it is not surprising to find a great deal of commonality in the structure and content of the textbooks, which may point to further curricular overlap between the Arab Public System in Palestine and national schools like al-Najah, that often adopted textbooks

published in Egypt. At the very least, it suggests that the nature of education in these two school systems was not necessarily as different as their leaders liked to imagine.

These textbooks shared certain common features stemming from the legacy of Islamic modernist thought explored in Chapter 1. As we recall, it was ignorance of the truth of Islam that Muhammad 'Abduh highlighted as paving the way for the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire; the corollary was that political revival would require the dissemination of "correct" ideas about religion through better training of teachers on one hand, and centralized control over school curricula on the other. Thus standardized textbooks were a crucial component in ensuring greater administrative control over religious teachings, even in environments that were already under greater state supervision than private *katātīb.* The modernist program—and its points of intersection with the colonial one—becomes even clearer by reviewing the content of the books themselves. I will examine four major characteristics here: the concern for authentic scriptural meaning, the emphasis on individual moral development, the privileging of ritualistic elements of Islam (*'ibādāt*) over socio-ethical ones (*mu'amalāt*),[78] and the insistence on the social utility of religious practice.

We must recall that the condemnation of rote memorization in learning the Qur'an stemmed in part from the fear that the true meaning of the text was thereby not imparted. As Gregory Starrett has argued regarding approaches to religious education in 19th century England, the text of Scripture was of secondary importance to the moral lessons it was

[78] '*ibādāt* and *mu'amalat* are legal categories within *shari'a*: *'ibādāt* are ritual actions relating to the relationship between man and God, whereas *mu'amalat* consist of laws governing relations between men, often of a commercial or contractual nature.

supposed to impart, "and in any case the text had to be understood in order to be useful."[79] Whereas pre-modern modes of learning the Qur'an can be understood as a form of embodiment in which "students embody, or possess the words of God within their very beings,"[80] modernists stressed the need to convey the authentic meaning of passages to children so that they would understand their ethical content. Turning to *ṣafwat durūs al-dīn wa al-akhlāq*, we see this shift manifest in the very structure of the book. Each section begins with a vocabulary table of uncommon terms, followed by a passage from the Qur'an within which the new words appear, and concludes with an explanation of the verses' meaning and significance. The authors use the same structure for introducing the student to Hadith, resulting in a form of authorial didacticism where the student (and the teacher) are guided down the narrow path of true meaning. A similar attempt to impart uniformity is evident in those portions of the texts related to ritual practices, or *'ibadat*. Precise instructions regarding the ablutions to make prior to prayer are followed by directions regarding the proper times for prayer and the postures to assume. Reinforcing the importance of one's ablutions, the text reminds student that "the clean pupil is loved by God and the people."[81]

Designed to combat what reformers viewed as the corruption of Islam in their midst, religious textbooks of this type necessarily shied away from a multiplicity of interpretations and approaches in favor of a singular narrative that, as in the case of these examples, receives the sanction of the state. Although such a description may seem to represent a mere pedagogic change—and indeed, overtly political statements are rare

[79] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*: 38.
[80] Boyle, "Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools," 185.
[81] Ibrahim Sanwir 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sā'ih, Ahmed al-Khalifa, 'Ali Hasn 'Auda *Mabāda fi al-dīn al-islamī* (Jaffa: Maktaba al-Tahir Ikhwan, 1947), 18.

within elementary texts of this type—attempts to articulate a version of "authentic" Islam and propagate it through state channels should not be thought of in educational terms alone. When we consider that the project of mass public education is political at its core, that is to say that the link between individual behavior and civic duty is presupposed in the formation of modern school systems, the leap from pedagogy to politics appears as little more than a small step. Moreover, the political implications of this pedagogic movement are visible in the later rise of groups that project this concern for "un-Islamic" behavior into the public space on one hand, and on the other, the states that attempt to promote their own version of true Islam through the channels of public education.[82]

As mentioned above, *'ibādāt* occupy a central role in many of these texts, one that often overshadows attention given to *mu'amalāt*. Teachings regarding the latter are conspicuously absent from *mabādá fi al-dīn al-islamī*, whose volumes devote substantial attention to laws related to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity alongside lessons on Hadith, the divine attributes (*tawhid*), etiquette (*tahdhib*) and the biography of Muhammad. Read as an attempt to articulate the modern contents of "the Islamic religion," the text does so in a way that is remarkably restrictive from a classical perspective. In juridical terms, *mu'amalāt* may regulate everything from how a commercial transaction is carried out to what goods one produces for sale. As these instances suggest, the defining characteristic of *mu'amalāt* is their social nature—indeed, the term is a derivation of the verb "to treat (someone)." It is telling that, in lieu of a legalistic treatment of commerce or

[82] This should not, however, be taken to meant that either party is actually able to monopolize the religious discourse. As Gregory Starrett has shown in his study of Egypt, the process of habituating students to adopt "correct" Muslim behavior is complicated by the functionalist terms "that actively encourage students to draw connections between the world of this life and the world of texts," adding that "once the possibility of this sort of interpretation is opened, the construction of additional, or alternate, readings of Muslim practice is inevitable." Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*: 129.

social interactions, the textbook raises commercial issues in a moralistic manner. Thus the student is told to imitate Muhammad, cast here as a budding capitalist: "The Prophet would guard his profits (literally: booty) and trade, for he was active and a lover of work."[83]

The emphasis on individual moral development offers a clear point of overlap with the curriculum adopted for use in the Arab Public System. Within both cases, the novelty of their discursive project lies not in the practices they describe, but in the impulse to identify them as constituting the essential core of Islam. Consequently, it makes more sense to speak of privileged tradition rather than invented ones. A few concrete examples elucidate this point. In the case of textbooks I examined, we detect a marked tendency to privilege explanations of religious duties that highlight their social utility. Thus according to one text, the fast of Ramadan is undertaken to teach the child the pains of hunger so that he will understand the imperative to give charity to those who are needy.[84] While this humanitarian rationale may strike us as a modern invention, it is also found within a number of classical sources, particularly from Shi'a scholars.[85] What is unique, then, is not the explanation itself, but the privileging of it over others that might stress, for instance, the fragility of human life before God the creator. Similarly, the Hajj is described as an opportunity to meet Muslims from other countries and establish communal ties with them, stressing the practical benefits that stem from completing one's obligation over those that regard it as a commemoration of Muhammad's resanctification of Mecca.[86]

---

[83] 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sā'ih, *Mabāda fi al-dīn al-islamī*.
[84] Ibid., 29-30.
[85] For instance, the 11th century scholar Muhammad Bakar Majlisi includes this justification in section 96 of his *Bihar al-Anwar*. The same sentiment was also attributed to the eighth Shi'a Imam, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, a compendium *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, which is dated to the late 16th or early 17th century. I would like to express my gratitude to Hossein Kamaly of Barnard College for bringing these sources to my attention.
[86] 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sā'ih, *Mabāda fi al-dīn al-islamī*: 33.

Much of what has been described thus far is harmonious with ideas about religious education that emerged from British colonial circles. That said, a closer look at al-Najah's program of study points toward the limits of this concord and helps to explain why Palestinian nationalists derided the same government school system that they also imitated in key ways. In what follows, I will suggest that the crucial element of dissonance stemmed not from divergent definitions of Islam, but from the different conceptions of its role in the life of the Arab nation as a political body. Here we see that the Protestant redefinition of Islam as a bounded series of ritual practices—explained in terms of social benefit—and universal ethical norms could actually facilitate the national project rather than restrain it.

There is perhaps no better example of this than Darwaza himself, who was both an author of interpretive works on Islam and the co-founder of a political party that consciously tried to transcend the sectarian lines that divided Palestinian society. Together with leaders like Hamdi al-Husayni, Darwaza was the leading force in a movement that "tied communal-religious organization to imperialism, but nationalism to true independence.[87] Moreover, there is no sense that he found his commitment to the revitalization of Islam at odds with his belief in cross-communal Arab unity. Through a careful examination of Darwaza's reading of history, it is possible to detect a unique conceptualization of the relationship between Arab identity and Islam that accepted key tenets of secular modernity while nevertheless rejecting the definition of religion bound by the private space.

At the core of his thought, Darwaza argued that the Arab nation and Islam existed in a mutually reinforcing relationship wherein the fortunes of one directly impacted the

[87] Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine*: 116.

position of the other; neither could flourish in the modern period without the other. "Arabness grew stronger through the strength of Islam, and Islam grew stronger through the strength of Arabness."[88] As he states in his memoirs, it was his belief in an essential Arab-Islamic symbiosis that won the support of al-Najah's school committee, which was initially divided regarding his appointment. "I synthesized social, historical, national and Islamic discussions for the students, and this was most likely what caused them to decide to include me in the body of founders and offer me the task of directing the school."[89] Darwaza's textbooks represented an attempt to translate this intellectual current into terms accessible to students learning about the Arab past. Consider the following passage from Darwaza's text, *Studies in Arab History from Ancient Times until the Present*, which was used in the upper elementary classes at al-Najah:

> The hijra counts among the greatest events in the history of the prophet and Islam. It shows us that the prophet and his companions abandoned their nation, relatives and possessions and risked their lives in pursuit of the call of Islam. And this was the beginning of the greatness of Islam and the Arabs. Afterward, Islam grew stronger to a great extent, and because of that the Arabs acquired great strength and glory. Therefore among the obligations of Muslims and Arabs is to respect the history of the hijra, and to celebrate the first year of the hijra, and to follow the example of the prophet and his noble companions in their sacrifice and willpower.[90]

As is evident in this passage, which is taken from the textbook's biography of Muhammad, Darwaza did not believe that the essential connection between Arabness and Islam created an exclusionary framework. On the contrary, commemorating the prophet's *hijra* to Medina is recast here as an obligation upon Arabs as a collective entity. Because the greatness of the Arab nation is organically linked to the advance of Islam, customs that were "religious" in nature could be transformed into national obligations. Reinforcing the point, Darwaza

---

[88] Darwaza, *Muthakkirat Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza*, 1: 9.
[89] Ibid., 520.
[90] ———, *durūs al-tārikh al-'arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* 63.

concludes his biography of Muhammad with the following hadith: "If the Arabs are degraded, Islam is degraded" (*idha dhalat al-'arab dhal al-islām*).[91]

Perhaps most remarkably, the essential connection between Islam and the Arab nation is actually what facilitates communal action across sectarian lines: because, Darwaza suggests, Islam guarantees freedom of religion and does not command individuals to abandon their own customs, it can act as both a pillar of Arab national heritage and a preserver of religious difference. This is implied in a number of passages dealing with the spread of Islam. For instance, when Muhammad and his followers arrived in Medina, he concluded a pact with the Jews living there to respect their freedom of religion, "because the Islamic religion does not command by force that one should leave his religion."[92] This forms a contrast with the Byzantine rulers of Greater Syria, who, according to Darwaza, oppressed the people "regardless of their sect" by imposing high taxes and "interfering in their religious freedom (*huriyatuhum al-diniya*).[93] It was for this reason that Arab armies were welcomed into Jerusalem as liberators, bearing a letter that guaranteed the inhabitants of Palestine both religious freedom and the protection of property.[94]

With this historical understanding acting as a backdrop, it becomes clearer how al-Najah could boast of being an Islamic institution that opened its doors to non-Muslim students. Indeed, its curricular materials and mission statement speak to this outlook, professing, on one hand, that the school was located "in an Arab, Islamic country and that the eye of the pupil shall not encounter [in the school] other than what strengthens his Arab and Islamic affinities." At the same time, "the school opens its doors also to non-

[91] Ibid., 71.
[92] Ibid., 66.
[93] Ibid., 85.
[94] Ibid., 111.

Muslim students," adding that "non-Muslim students have lived with their Muslim brothers a life of affection and complete serenity in what promises to thwart the sectarian tendency implanted by [past] generations."[95]

In order to round out this discussion of al-Najah and understand its novelty, it is worth considering one final textbook, *kitāb al-dīn al-islamī*, which the school used for religious instruction in its secondary classes.[96] The book was co-authored by Mustafa 'Inānī, who we encountered above, along with 'Abd al-Wahab Khayr al-Din and Hasn Mansur, both of *Dar al-'Ulum.* It is here that we are presented with the clearest articulation of the form of Islamic modernism that al-Najah promoted and the political dimensions it entailed. As I have argued thus far, the school's curriculum demonstrated a remarkable degree of overlap with colonial ideas regarding the nature of Islam as an entity conceptually bound to certain intellectual spaces and forms of religious experience on one hand, and chiefly concerned with individual moral development on the other. Yet, in terms of conceptualizing the role of Islam in the new political order, al-Najah and its leaders disputed the secular ideal of religious education separated from political engagement. It is here that we see the two sides passing like ships in the night: one claiming religious education as the key to maintaining the traditional order, the other claiming it as an essential part of the revolutionary future.

In contrast to earlier grades—which mimicked the government's division of Islam into components concerned with the Qur'an and ritual practice—al-Najah's secondary classes did away with this bifurcated approach and focused exclusively on "The Islamic

[95] *Barnamaj al-Najah al-Wataniya Nablusi*: 4-5.
[96] 'Abd al-Wahab Khayr al-Din Hasn Mansur, Mustafa 'Ināni, *kitāb al-dīn al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dar al-Kuttub, 1930).

Religion" (*al-diyāna al-islāmiya*), with subject matter increasingly geared toward the social and political dimensions of Islam. Thus students in upper secondary classes were to study the "wisdom of instituting *'ibādāt* and *mu'ālamāt*," and attend lectures on Islamic social theory as well as "religious and social topics that have a direct relationship to the contemporary life of Muslims."[97] In lieu of moral exhortations or detailed descriptions of proper ritual practice, the text delves into realms that secular modernity would deem outside the scope of "religious" matters: governance, intellectual freedom, the rational sciences and commercial activity.

Let us look, for example, at the chapters dealing with the scientific achievements pioneered during the golden age of Islam. The first thing to highlight is that this material occurs within the context of Islamic religious instruction, and yet includes content that—following the logic of the government curriculum—would most likely be labeled historical rather than "religious" in nature. However, this is fitting according to the text's emphasis on the singularity of Islam's support for scientific inquiry; indeed, the rational sciences appear in the text on a continuum that includes jurisprudence and other religious sciences. This is because, the student is told, "the Islamic religion came to break the shackles of the mind."[98] Channeling the legacy of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the text quotes Herbert Spencer's famous statement about the incompatibility of knowledge and religion only to argue for Islam's exceptional nature.[99] The text then transitions to discuss "the service of Muslims to science," surveying a predictable assortment of scholars, the great libraries of the 'Abbasid Empire, and the *madrasas* founded by Nizam al-Mulk.

---

[97] *Barnamaj al-Najah al-Wataniya Nablusi*: 18-19.
[98] ———, *kitāb al-dīn al-Islāmī*: 135.
[99] Ibid., 139.

This was not meant as a mere historical lesson, but—sprinkled with a carefully selected group of Qur'anic verses (*ayat*) and hadiths—as an attempt to situate scientific inquiry and the pursuit of material progress as one of the Muslim's essential duties to God. Thus, the student is told that the sciences were created not merely to know God, but "to overcome the hardships of this world" and that "the Islamic religion prescribes learning the sciences regardless of their type or end goal."[100] Not surprisingly, the first group of *ayat* students encounter are taken from Sura al-Aʿrāf:

> Oh, Children of Abraham
> Wear your beautiful apparel
> At every time and place of prayer
> Eat and drink, but waste not by excess,
> For Allah loves not those who waste
> Say: Who hath forbidden the gifts of Allah,
> Which He hath produced for his servants,
> And the things, clean and pure,
> (Which he hath provided) for sustenance?
> Say: They are in the life of this world for those who believe
> And (purely) for them on the Day of Judgment.[101]

Lest the point be lost, the text includes yet another set of *ayat* (Sura al-Baqara, 21-22), with a *tafsir* explaining that God calls believers to two types of works: *ʿibādāt*, such as prayer and fasting, and "worldly works, to be useful in their worldly lives—which are a means to their final lives—such as the useful sciences, commerce and industry and others."[102] Material goods and the scientific knowledge required to produce them are not simply acceptable within this framework, but part and parcel of the duties prescribed by God himself.

---

[100] Ibid., 137-38.
[101] *The Qur'an*, Sura Al-Aʿref, 31-32. Adapted from the translation of 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Beltsville, MD: Amana 1999).
[102] Hasn Mansur, *kitāb al-dīn al-Islāmī*: 221.

Just as science and industry lie within the realm of "religious" concerns, so too do matters dealing with governance. Here we find the clearest challenge to the colonial epistemic order and the equation of religious values with political indifference. Following a discussion on modes of juridical reasoning and different Islamic legal schools, the text turns to a discussion of *shura*, consultation. "Allah made *shura* the basis of governance in Islam and commanded his prophet (the blessing of God be upon him), saying, 'And consult them in the matter." And he clarified what Muslims must do in their government, saying 'And command them to consult amongst themselves'."[103] However, the corruption of later rulers led to the decline and eventual disappearance of *shura* as a religious duty, so much so that people began to think that Islam prescribed a form of authority that was individual and despotic.

Enticing students to look at this past not merely as history, but rather, as sacred duty, the section concludes with the following directive: "look at the most advanced states in the current era and [see] their strength is found in their laws being based on consultation (*shura*), and that the will of their people is respected. And this is the secret of their greatness, happiness and progress."[104] The political implications here are not difficult to deduce, nor is the intertwining of religious obligations with worldly concerns hard to discern. Rather, this review of curricular materials points toward the flexibility of Islamic symbols and discourses to assume a functional role in modern political thought. As we shall from examples drawn from Zionist education, it is precisely the privileging of certain elements within a sacred textual tradition—often to the exclusion of all others—that distinguished Muslim modernists from the so-called traditionalists they hoped to

[103] Ibid., 97.
[104] Ibid., 100.

supersede. Examples like this point to what Jonathan Sheehan has called "a different vision of secularization," one that "focuses less on the disappearance of religion than on its transformation and reconstruction."[105]

We should keep in mind that this text was used in secondary classes at al-Najah, which makes direct comparison with the Arab Public System more difficult. As explained in chapter 2, the Department of Education purposefully neglected secondary education throughout the Mandate period, fearing the destabilizing effects of a well-educated Arab population. However imperfect, this comparison nevertheless reveals that there was a great deal of conceptual overlap between the two curricula, particularly at the primary level. However, as I have suggested, this similarity yields to points of divergence with regard to how religious education was positioned vis-à-vis national politics. Certainly Darwaza would have agreed with Jerome Farrell's notion of a common Christian-Muslim morality, but not with his view of that moral system as set apart from national politics. Rather, as al-Najah emphasized, this commonality was what enabled Arab brothers from across confessions to transcend the sectarian past while striving for a new national future. Taken as a whole, this analysis highlights both the incredible proximity and irresolvable barriers that characterized the relationship between colonial administrators and native educators.

Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on observations made in Chapter Three regarding the administrative structure established by Palestine's Education Ordinance. In that context, I

[105] Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*: xi.

argued that Palestinian educators were in an unenviable position concerning its battles with the Department of Education insofar as control over Arab education was concerned. The Department of Education rebuffed Palestinian attempts to exercise influence over government schools as *national* bodies because educational autonomy was only granted to recognized *religious* communities. This administrative order was favorable to Zionism, whose organizational bodies were the only ones recognized as *both* religious and national entities. Conversely, Palestinians who desired autonomy over education were thus offered it insofar as they sought to create and supervise independent Muslim and Christian schools; they would not, however, be allowed to control public education as a national institution.

This chapter has tried to examine the conceptual underpinnings of the colonial approach to religious education and has argued that British administrators conceived of religious study as an apolitical practice linked to a traditional social order. Chiefly concerned with matters of ritual and individual moral conduct, this mode of religiosity was a presumed counterweight to nationalist passions. The key issue here is not whether Islamic education was historically disconnected from political life. Rather, we are elucidating a historically contingent relationship between religion, mass education and political action that was impossible prior to the age of modernity.

Furthermore, this discussion has highlighted the capacity for figures like ʻIzzat Darwaza to both accept the fundamental epistemic revolution at the heart of European secularism and to reject its political implications. Certainly, this should point to the inadequacy of paradigms that would explain such figures as either beacons of colonial resistance, or conversely, colonial mimics who fully internalized the mental frame of the very political forces they opposed. Moreover, the texts analyzed here suggest that al-Najah

attempted to chart its own path between colonial modernity and the "traditional" sectarian order. On one hand, the juridical and conceptual restriction of "the Islamic religion" functioned to create a space for a cross-communal Arab identity. In this regard, the new epistemic order was not without its pragmatic advantages, particularly for nationalists like Darwaza. On the other hand, the restriction of Islam's legal jurisdiction to newly-coined "religious" matters did not necessarily mean the waning of its political influence. Rather, al-Najah promoted a mutually constitutive Arab-Islamic social order that framed political action without harming individual freedom. This notion of religion seemed strange to British officials, and yet should not have had they been more attentive to the way in which Christianity continued to impact their country's own political action. It was only because this influence was rendered invisible by the invention of the secular that the notion of politicized religion seemed so contradictory.

More concretely, though, the administrative structure of Palestine presented its own problems: the religious community was the sole unit of making political claims, and yet religion itself was supposedly apolitical. There is certainly support here for a cynical view that it was precisely *because* religion was thought of in apolitical terms that the British chose to govern through it. Yet this assessment does not present a full picture. As I argue in the following chapter, education administrators approached Jewish communities in much the same way, generating a central contradiction in which Jews were recognized as a nation while Judaism was supposed to rise above the political fray. This chapter has detailed the ways that one Palestinian school responded to the new political and intellectual orders that emerged during this formative period. The final chapter will examine attempts by Zionist educators to formulate a new relationship between Jewishness and national politics.

Ultimately, I will suggest that our story is not merely about the rule of Palestine through religious communities, but clashes regarding the nature of religion itself.

Chapter 5

Border Clashes

I have argued thus far that the Government of Palestine's Department of Education advanced two goals with regard to religious education. On the one hand, religious education formed an integral part of the effort to govern Palestine through sectarian units that would allegedly preserve the "traditional" social and economic order. This found reflection in Palestine's legal structure, which made the religious community the only entity capable of claiming educational autonomy. I have further shown that the Department of Education attempted to maintain and even expand the role of religious education in the Arab Public System, propelled largely by the belief in religious instruction—if done "properly"—as a tool for inculcating "universal" moral ideals that would mitigate nationalist fervor. As shown in an analysis of the government school curriculum, this universal morality was actually the expression of a rather particular understanding of the relationship between politics and religious practice whose defining modern characteristic has been an attempt to hide its own particularism.

On the whole, British officials did not consider that religious education could serve more radical purposes, as any revolutionary use of religious education necessarily transgressed the boundary meant to separate "real" religious values from their political expression. Within this framework, if religious education meddled in the work of mass politics, it did so at the expense of its "religious" nature; indeed, it became something else entirely. There was arguably no greater offender of this educational model than the one being developed under Zionist

auspices. At the most basic level, the fact that nearly every Zionist school was administered by one of the three major political parties represented a direct challenge to the British ideal of education devoid of political influence. As a further complication, separate management structures for each of the three "streams" of Zionist education—Labor, General and Mizrachi—led to administrative redundancies and financial inefficiencies that supported the Department of Education's characterization of the Hebrew Public System as "uneconomical and ineffective."[1]

This chapter will examine the ways in which differing conceptions of the content and function of religious education strained relations between the Zionist school system and the Government of Palestine. In order to link the discursive features of British policy making to the historical record, I will analyze the government's attempt to aid Orthodox Jewish education—including schools outside the Va'ad Leumi network—as a means to advance an educational alternative to the perceived secularism of the Zionist mainstream. Finally, I will argue that despite the common sentiment among government administrators and latter day scholars, the Zionist school system was anything *but* secular either in terms of presenting clear lines of demarcation between sacred and worldly knowledge or promoting the latter at the expense of the former. Arguing against the notion that Jewish religious education was largely neglected during the Mandate period, I reveal the necessity of distinguishing between institutional and conceptual levels of analysis. While the

[1] This characterization appears consistently in evaluations of the Zionist school system; see, for example, Jerome Farrell, "Relations between the Government of Palestine and the Jewish School System 1918-1941." November 26, 1943. TNA, CO 733/453/4. Section 21.

former might suggest what I will term the decline thesis—usually accompanied by puzzlement regarding the later "return" of religion in contemporary Israeli society—a critical conceptual analysis suggests the Zionist movement was deeply invested in stressing certain forms of religiosity – or more precisely, Jewishness. Tensions with the Mandatory government thus reveal a quite complicated dispute regarding the nature of "Judaism" as a religion among the Jews as a nation.

Farrell's Complaint

Beyond its administrative faults, the greatest source of contention between the Zionist school system and the Government of Palestine concerned the politicization of Jewish schools. While concerns of this nature existed throughout the Mandate period, they reached a fevered pitch under the second director of education, Jerome Farrell, who served in that role from 1937-1947. If Humphrey Bowman had managed to find a *modus operandi* with Zionist leaders, that accord began to break down with Farrell's assumption of control. Under his tenure, the Department of Education for the first time acted on its long-standing threat to withhold a portion of the block grant from the Va'ad Leumi if certain reforms were not enacted. As we are set to examine, the Department began extending direct aid to a number of Orthodox religious schools unaffiliated with the Va'ad Leumi. Both acts were no doubt designed to challenge the Zionist position vis-à-vis the education of Jewish youth in Palestine, or to at least moderate its approach. It is therefore worth asking what particularly about the Zionist school system was so offensive?

The recurring complaints were threefold. The first was that Zionist political parties exercised undue influence over Jewish education. Directly stemming from this, a second problem was that of administrative inefficiencies, in addition to pedagogic misdeeds. Finally, members of the Zionist Teachers Association viewed themselves not so much as "public officers" but as "leaders in an industrial dispute whose primary and ultimate object is political power."[2] However, as I shall argue, these complaints were part of a larger problem in the eyes of the Mandatory government, namely that harnessing Judaism to a political cause that viewed education as one of its primary "weapons" upset not merely the proper educational order, but the political-theological one as well.[3]

During his tenure as Director of Education, Jerome Farrell authored several reports in which he criticized the politicization of the Hebrew Public System.[4] In this he was not alone, as both the McNair and Anglo-American Commissions expressed similar alarm regarding the subordination of Jewish education to Zionist political ends. The former commission went as far as to direct a confidential letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in order "to stress one matter to which we attach importance but which, if we expressed our views fully in our Report, might, in the present state of affairs in Palestine, cause embarrassment or frustrate some of our recommendations." That matter, "one of the most disturbing aspects of education

[2] High Commissioner Wauchope to Secretary of State for the Colonies. September 29, 1941. TNA, CO 733/442/17.
[3] Quote from Joseph Ahronovitz, "*l'sheilah kiyum batei sefer b'eretz yisrael*," ha-poel ha-tza'ir, 12 (1920), in Elboim-Dror, *ha-ḫinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: Vol. 2, 4; ibid., Vol. II; 4.
[4] See, for example, Farrell's memorandum of November 26, 1943, "Relations between the Government of Palestine and the Jewish School System. 1918-1941." TNA, CO 733/453/4. Farrell earlier expressed his views directly to the Va'ad Leumi and urged the body to undertake numerous pedagogic and administrative reforms. See Farrell, "Jewish Education Administrative Reform." June 13, 1939. TNA, CO 733/435/18.

and home life in Palestine," was none other than "the extent to which young children are preoccupied with political and other ideological matters."[5] The letter continued to lament the presence in Zionist schools of youth movements affiliated with each of the major political parties. "The fact is that most, if not all, of the political parties and ideological groups are making a deliberate attempt, by means of a technique which the totalitarian States have made familiar, to organise children under the respective banners at a very early age without regard to the interests of the children's education."[6] In somewhat milder language, the published version of the report touched on the inefficiencies and pedagogic damage done by the trend system, in which "Jewish political parties have played a very prominent part in the provision of schools and teachers."[7]

The McNair Commission also criticized the behavior of teachers, who not only went on frequent strikes when their salaries were in arrears, but refused to curtail their political activism in a manner befitting public servants. While the Government of Palestine had forbidden teachers in the Arab Public System from joining any political group or association since 1925, in 1946, the McNair Commission could merely plead that Jewish teachers "must realize their position, as public servants entrusted with the care of children, makes it necessary for them to place some degree of restriction upon their participation in public controversy, whether religious or political."[8] Echoing arguments repeatedly forwarded within

[5] Confidential letter from Arnold D. McNair to Secretary of State for the Colonies. March 26, 1946. CO 733/453/8.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *The system of education of the Jewish community in Palestine: Report of the commission of enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1945*: 7.
[8] Ibid., 76.

British administrative circles, the Commission took for granted the existence of a neutral educational field governed merely by pedagogic requirements upon which political concerns exercised an unnatural influence. Not only was this understanding undermined by the material dependence of systems of public education—both in Britain and in the empire—on political decision making, it similarly masked the fact that attempts to shield schools from political influence represented a very real form of colonial politics.

Given these observations, the McNair Commission's ultimate recommendation that the Jewish community be given *more* autonomy in educational matters seems somewhat contradictory. As "one of the chief instruments in the building of the Jewish national home in Palestine," the report noted, "education means to the Zionist Jew something more than it does in England or in most other countries." Because "the strain of national idealism which pervades Jewish education is often puzzling to those trained in one of the British educational systems," the Commission argued that "the responsibility for the management of the Jewish schools should be in the hands of the Jewish community."[9] Published the same year, though broader in scope, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry reflected a similar contradiction. While criticizing Jewish schools for inculcating "a spirit of aggressive Hebrew nationalism," the report nevertheless recommended that the Jewish community should serve as a model for delegating control of Palestinian education to Arab community. "A large share of responsibility for Arab

[9] Ibid., 5.

education might well be assumed by an Arab community, similar to the Jewish community already established in Palestine."[10]

These inconsistencies were not lost on Jerome Farrell, who detailed his observations on both reports in an extraordinary memorandum to the Colonial Office in November 1946. The lengthy report represents the ultimate distillation of Farrell's frustrations regarding Zionist education in Palestine. His immediate concern was that the Colonial Office might entertain the McNair and Anglo-American Commissions' recommendations regarding increased educational autonomy for Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine. Commenting on both reports, Farrell warned, "if unselfishness, peace and goodwill are principal aims of education it will be difficult to reconcile the two relevant recommendations which each Report in effect makes and which, bluntly stated, are (a) that a 'fiery nationalism' shall be eradicated from the schools, (b) that control of education shall be vested in fiery nationalist politicians."[11]

Farrell took further issue with the McNair Report's conclusion that Zionist leaders' sense of "national idealism" mandated their autonomous control over Jewish education. "The phrase 'national idealism' is misleading," Farrell wrote, continuing:

> I should prefer "racial" or even "tribal" to "national" and "chauvinism" or "indoctrination" to "idealism", a word which to English minds inevitably suggests high and unpractical moral standards. There are no doubt many individual Jews who are idealists but the Zionist Organization's official policy and power direct the tribalism of the Jews to strictly selfish, practical

[10] Anglo-American Committe of Inquiry, *Report to the United States Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), Section 9.
[11] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. TNA, CO/733/476/2. Section 8.

> and material ends. The aim is of course attained, as in Nazi Germany, by the unscrupulous manipulation of childish and adolescent emotion.[12]

This was only one of several instances in which Farrell compared the educational practices of the Yishuv to the political indoctrination of totalitarian regimes, particularly in Nazi Germany. Similarly he elsewhere expressed concern that channeling funds through the Va'ad Leumi, as opposed to via Local Education Authorities, was a dangerous step toward "the excessive centralization of the continent and of Nazism."[13] Comparisons with totalitarian states are telling, as the latter openly embraced the form of social engineering that Farrell claimed was foreign to British values. If we recall the modern educational constitution proposed earlier, such practices were situated directly across the absolute (yet continually transgressed) boundary from pedagogic responsibility – the purported base of colonial policies.

In fact, Farrell's memo charged Zionism with severing Jews from the two great "civilising influences" available to them: first, the gentile cultures of Western European countries, and more important for our purposes, religious Judaism. Zionists were thus depicted as having absolutely removed themselves from any common ethical ground:

> The immoral or hypocritical attitude of the Zionist leaders is not that of most Western Jews but few of these migrate to Palestine and those who remain in the Diaspora do not fully understand the differences between their own ethical outlook and that of the Poles, Russians and other Easterners who constitute the larger part of Palestinian Jewry and direct its internal policy. These have not been long, widely and intimately subjected to civilising influences either at home or in Palestine and, having abandoned religious practices, are without any basis for the development of moral principle.[14]

---

[12] Ibid.
[13] Jerome Farrell to District Commissioner, Haifa. August 25, 1943. ISA 1056/35 – mem.
[14] Ibid. Section 5.

Indeed, Farrell emphasized, "there is no common moral and theological ground upon which politically organised Jewry and a Christian civilization can stand together in harmony."[15] As he emphasized later in the memo, there was simply no way that Jewish identity could form the basis for political action without violating the principles of "common humanism," principles that, we might add, were seemingly uncompromised by the political acts of "Christian civilization." Farrell assumed a quasi-confessional mode in stating:

> I must admit that for many years, and despite many indications, I myself failed fully to understand why in the national home, Palestine, it should be necessary to reinforce the natural separatism which dispersed Jewry had exhibited through millennia by exaggerated attention to Hebrew language and other, more unprofitable, Hebrew studies. Ultimately, however, though late, the reason became clear, that the aim was not a passive, cultural and religious Judaism but the nurture of an active, selfish and aggressively secular, and imperialistic spirit liable to direct itself to domination over neighbouring peoples.[16]

It is important to note that there is no epistemic space for a religious Judaism that is something other than cultural or passive. Beyond pedagogic irresponsibility, Zionism was thus guilty of promoting a political-theological hybrid that simultaneously overturned the Jew's "natural" passivity and violated the sublime principles of religion itself. This attitude was common among British officers in Palestine, including Farrell's predecessor, Humphrey Bowman. The latter spoke charitably of Orthodox Jews, particularly those who had been in Palestine prior to the First World War. These were the *watani* Jews who granted coherence to the idea

[15] Ibid. Section 16.
[16] Ibid. Section 61.

of the Holy Land, "the most unoffending and inoffensive Jews in the world: holy men and their families, and religious students."[17]

Zionists were not the only party guilty of using education as an instrument of political indoctrination, only the most successful. In the same memorandum, the Director of Education continued to state, "the attitude of Palestine Zionists to education is essentially identical not only with that of the Nazis and the Russian Communists but also with that of Jamal Hussaini and other Arab politicians who wish to use the Arab schools to inculcate fanatical anti-Zionism." However, he noted with satisfaction, "the Arab politicians have been less successful and their influence touches in any considerable degree only Moslem private schools.... Thus a large majority of the Moslem and Christian population is still educated in the common principles of conduct which inform Christianity and Islam."[18]

Farrell continued this line of argumentation throughout, asserting that the Arab Public System was still grounded in the religious values that constituted a universal moral system, largely due to the special attention devoted to religious education. But insofar as Judaism acted as the basis of political identity, it sacrificed its place in the Abrahamic assembly:

> Religion is a full subject in the curriculum and thus the ultimate basis of ethical values in the Government schools is common to Islam and Christianity, for both accept a theology and moral principles based largely on Greek philosophy, while Islam regards Christ as at least a prophet. But "unassimilated" Judaism after rejecting successively both Hellenism and Christ is now reducing its own traditional faith, so far as it still survives at all as a religion, from monotheism to the older henotheism which leads to that

[17] Humphrey Bowman, diary entry dated August 28, 1929. MEC, Humphrey Bowman collection, Box 4A.
[18] Ibid. Section 6.

> racial self-worship which Albert Rosenberg [sic] borrowed from the Jews for Nordic ends.[19]

Again, having turned away from all possible sources of civilization, i.e. Christianity and Hellenism, Zionism was found guilty of further reducing the remnants of Judaism. Regarding the religious education given in Zionist schools, Farrell pronounced that within the Mizrachi system as "formal and dead, a matter of ritual and obsolete tabus." The General schools hardly fared any better in his estimation, as "the majority [of teachers] seem to have replaced religion by racialism." But worst of all was the situation within Labor schools, which were "in general secularizing and many are actively anti-religious" (original emphasis).[20]

Finally, the memorandum provides an important clue as to Farrell's self-understanding of his position and the way in which his views differed both from those of the Colonial Office and the Zionist Organization. "There are now two, and only two, relevant attitudes to educational policy, which need discussion in this place," he wrote. The first was the attitude of "persons who believe in, and misuse, the power of education over the human mind," namely "the Jewish Agency and the Zionists." The second was "the view of those who regard education, if at all, as a fad, a luxury or a nuisance," an attitude that "has often been exhibited by Colonial Governments." Most importantly for our purposes, Farrell identified a third perspective, no doubt his own, "that of persons who desire to use education for the common ends of Christian and Moslem morality." Importantly, to borrow once more

[19] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. TNA, CO/733/476/2. Section 22. Farrell was in all likelihood referring to Alfred Rosenberg, one of the Nazi party's chief ideologues.
[20] Ibid. Section 36.

from Jonathan Sheehan, Farrell's "universal" moral system was one that increasingly excluded Jews from "the religious patrimony of Western nations" because the "Hebrews simply could not provide the model of universal humanity that would regulate the new ideology of culture."[21]

However, as even Farrell recognized, his position was the minority one in Palestine, and indeed, no longer relevant in a time when the greatest possible danger—the transfer of education to Arab and Jewish communities—loomed on the horizon. Lest the Colonial Office take seriously recommendations to increase the level of local control over the Arab Public System, Farrell issued one final warning: "If then the Arab politicians follow the Zionist model and if the recommendations of the [McNair] Commission establish a premature and too complete autonomy in the education of both Palestinian races no ordinary Police but a Gestapo will be necessary to repress the over-excitement of young minds, Arab as well as Jewish."[22]

Education at the crossroads of authenticity and revolution

With approximately two-thirds of Palestine's Jewish children in schools under the Zionist administration, which possessed complete pedagogic and curricular autonomy, the Department of Education looked elsewhere in attempting to strengthen the religious character of Jewish education. Numerous initiatives that began in the early 1940s offered financial assistance to Orthodox schools that were often at political or ideological odds with the Va'ad Leumi. These included not only

[21] Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*: xiv.
[22] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. TNA, CO 733/476/2. Section 22.

the schools maintained by Agudat Israel, but a number of private *talmudei-torah* and schools that served Jews from Sephardic or Middle Eastern Jewish communities. This was, in many ways, a curious development and it is worth asking which goals the Department of Education hoped to achieve by supporting Orthodox Jewish education in Palestine. This is all the more necessary because almost no scholarly attention has been paid to the relationship between the Department of Education and Orthodox schools, while a review of this relationship challenges many of the commonly held assumptions about Jewish education during this period.[23]

The surviving papers from the Department of Education illustrate that the government grew increasingly involved in the support of Orthodox religious schools during the final decade of Mandatory rule. It is also evident that this policy was not merely advanced by Farrell or the Colonial Office, but largely embraced by the Department's Jewish inspectorate as well. This is significant, as these inspectors were influential educators in their own right. They included Joseph Bentwich, the younger brother of Norman Bentwich, the famed Orientalist, Shlomo Dov Goitein, and the Honorary Secretary of the Jewish Scouts in Palestine, J.L. Bloom. In addition to their regular responsibilities, Jewish inspectors oversaw a separate body, the Jerusalem Orthodox Schools Committee (*ha-va'adat l'vatei sefer ḥaredim b'yerushaliyim*), which distributed over LP 14,000 in direct grants to Orthodox

[23] To my knowledge, there has been no examination of the Mandatory government's relationship with Orthodox (non-Zionist) schools. This is not surprising given that scant attention has been paid even to the relationship between the Department of Education and the Zionist school system. See, for example, the very brief overview given in Reshef, *ha-ḥinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 151-70. The dominant scholarly trend, as reflected in Reshef and Deror's account, is to treat the Zionist school system as an autonomous unit that was shaped more by Zionist politics than by the Mandatory government. For a different account that argues the Va'ad Leumi was not attentive enough to the Mandatory's educational guidance, see Rachel Elboim-Dror, "British Educational Policies in Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2000).

schools from 1942-1947.[24] This was apart from a separate grant-giving initiative to aid schools in centers of the Old Yishuv, which awarded between LP 3000-10,000 annually to Orthodox schools unaffiliated with the Va'ad Leumi.[25]

It is also noteworthy that members of the Jewish Inspectorate tended to hold ideological positions that differed in important ways from dominant strains of Zionist thought. It was likely men of their ilk whom Farrell had in mind when praising the small minority of Jewish teachers that were "influenced by a modernist and more living religious sentiment."[26] For instance, Joseph Bentwich hailed from a British Zionist family that included his older brother Norman, Mandate Palestine's first Attorney General. Both men greatly admired the British and were alienated by the extreme nationalism expressed by the Eastern European Zionist leadership.

Judging by his activism following Israel's independence, Joseph was also dissatisfied both with contemporary forms of Orthodox Judaism and with "secular" Zionism, and this dissatisfaction may hint to why he was able to remain in Farrell's good graces. In the late 1950's, Bentwich founded the Amanah Group "to study and promote new interpretations of Judaism."[27] Amanah rejected the narrow equation of "religion" (*dat*) with ritual observance, and insisted on an ethical understanding of Judaism's core. "You want to know if someone is 'religious' or not. You look if he

---

[24] Joseph Bentwich, "Summary of Activities for Jerusalem Orthodox Schools Committee, 1942-1947." October 27, 1947. ISA 1057/24-mem.
[25] For the 1941-42 school year, LP 4200 was distributed, which included a LP 1200 grant to schools maintained by Alliance Israélite Universelle. In 1945-46, the last year for which a complete report exists, this aid reached LP 10,800. Government of Palestine Department of Education, *Annual Report 1941-42* and *Annual Report 1945-46.*
[26] Jerome Farrell, "Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report." November 30, 1946. TNA, CO/733/476/2. Section 36.
[27] Benjamin Jaffe and Cecil Roth, "Bentwich family," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007).

wears a *kippah* on his head, restrains from traveling on Shabbat, eats kosher foods (*shomer kashrut*). It is not important if he is honest in his speech and his exchanges, if he is loyal to others or only worries for himself…If he performs the 'positive commandments' that are in the *Shulḫan Arech*, he is a religious Jew." In contrast, Bentwich encouraged the association of religiosity with ethical conduct, cooperation with one's neighbor, and inter-religious tolerance.[28]

Shlomo Dov Goitein was similarly out of step with the Zionist mainstream. He received a doctorate from the University of Frankfurt where he wrote a dissertation on Islamic prayer under Joseph Horovitz.[29] After immigrating to Palestine in 1923 (with his close friend, Gershom Scholem), he served as a teacher at the Reali School in Haifa and became one of the first lecturers at the Hebrew University. Goitein's Zionism was distinctive in that it stressed the Semitic origins of the Jewish people and held that the success of the national revival hinged on the extent to which Jews were willing to embrace this patrimony. He encouraged Jews to study Arabic and stressed the Arabian context of ancient Israel.[30] Perhaps as an extension of this

[28] See, for example, Bentwich's introductory remarks and lectures given at the group's annual meetings. "Dinim ve-heshbonot al kinuse hug "Amanah" ba-shanim 722-724," ed. Joseph S. Bentwich (Jerusalem :: R. Mas, 1965), 4, 78-83.

[29] A partial biography of Goitein, particularly regarding his involvement with the Cairo Geniza, is available in Adina Hoffman, *Sacred Trash: the lost and found world of the Cairo Geniza*, ed. Peter Cole and S. Schechter, 1st ed. ed. (New York :: Nextbook :, 2011), Chp. 10.

[30] For more on Goitein's encouragement of Arabic study, see Liora Halperin, "Orienting Language: Reflections on the Study of Arabic in the Yishuv," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 4 (2006). Within Goitein's own body of scholarship, a number of publications address the similarities that linked Jewish and Arab peoples; for example, S.D. Goitein, "ha-Makor 'ha-Aravi' shel Yisrael v'Dato [The "Arabic" Source of Israel and its Religion]," *Zion* 2, no. Alef (1937); ———, "ha-Yachas el ha-Shilton b'Islam u v'Yahadut [The Relationship to Government/Rule in Islam and Judaism]," *Tarbiz* 19, no. 3–4 (Gimel-Dalet) (1948); ibid.

view, he performed ethnographic work on the Jews of Yemen, whom he viewed as vessels for the preservation of Judaism in its most authentic form.[31]

Goitein also wrote extensively on Jewish education, both historically and prescriptively, publishing several articles in the leading education journal of the yishuv*, hed ha-ḫinuch.* During his time as an education inspector, he authored a full-length book, *hora'at ha-Tanakh*, on teaching the Hebrew Bible, to which he often referred Jewish educators.[32] In managing his own children's education, Goitein stressed the centrality of the Torah and personally devoted attention to preparing his son for his Bar Mitzvah. Goitein's religious practice seems to have been largely private: he prayed at home every morning, and with his family on the Sabbath.[33]

Perhaps most importantly, Goitein maintained a distance from overt political activism and never affiliated himself with a Zionist party, despite being friendly with Judah Magnes and members of Brit Shalom. In this regard, it is telling that Goitein's political worldview is disputed: while his daughter, Ayala, believes he generally sympathized with the Labor party,[34] a former student of Goitein's, Eric Ormsby, has characterized him as politically right-wing.[35] He respected and admired the British as a cultural force and maintained cordial relations with his colleagues at the Department of Education, though he never developed a genuine friendship with

[31]For instance Goitein claimed that Yemenite Jews "remain very much the same as they had been at the end of the Talmudic period," and thus offered a window into the original form of Jewish education. ———, "Jewish Education in Yemen as an archetype of traditional Jewish education," in *Between Past and Future, Essays and Studies on aspects on Immigrant absroption in Israel*, ed. C. Frankestein (Jerusalem: 1953).

[32] ———, *Hora'at ha-Tanakh ba-vait ha-sefer ha-'amimi v'ha-tichoni: matarot, shita, tochnit [Teaching the Hebrew Bible in elementary and high school: aims, method, syllabus]* (Jerusalem1942). ———, "Limud tefilah b'kitah dalet ha-'amimit: tefilah ha-chag [Teaching prayer in 4th grade: Holiday prayer]," *hed ha-ḫinuch* 18, no. 5 (1944).

[33] Interview with Elon Goitein, January 25, 2012. Herzaliya Petuach, Israel.

[34] Interview with Ayala (Goitein) Gordon, January 24th, 2012. Jerusalem.

[35] Eric Ormsby, "The "born Schulmeister"," *The New Criterion* 2003.

Farrell.[36] But his sense of professionalism and aloofness from Zionist politics surely must have recommended him to the Director of Education, as Goitein appears as a man who knew how to maintain a sense of separation between his religious, political, professional and academic selves.

To pivot our discussion back to the archival record, it appears that the impetus to aid Orthodox Jewish schools outside the Zionist system came from two directions: first, the refusal on the part of the Va'ad Leumi to undertake certain administrative reforms, which resulted in the Government of Palestine withholding a portion of its annual block grant; and second, the desire to improve the status of "traditional" religious education vis-à-vis the perceived secularism of the Zionist schools. It is likely that the financial stress on schools whose funding sources were disrupted by World War II also contributed to the Department's decision, though the notoriously parsimonious Mandatory government was unlikely to extend its resources based on financial need alone.

Summarizing the government's position in a dispatch to the Colonial Office, High Commissioner MacMichael noted that, "after due warning", the Department of Education had withheld a portion of the annual block grant given to the Va'ad Leumi for the financial years 1938-1941. These funds were then redirected toward the "large number of Jewish schools" that existed "outside the Vaad Leumi system which for various reasons they are unwilling or unable to enter."[37] The causes of the present predicament were "not simple," MacMichael stressed, and were ironically

[36] Interview with Ayala (Goitein) Gordon, January 24th, 2012. Jerusalem.
[37] High Commissioner MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies. August 14, 1942. TNA, CO 733/435/18.

the products of the government's preference for administering Palestine on sectarian lines. "In the first place the Vaad Leumi, though it is the council of the Jewish Religious Community in Palestine as established by Religious Communities (Organization) Ordinance is not essentially a religious body and discourages religious education except in a minority group of Vaad Leumi schools known as Mizrachi." However, he noted, "Mizrachi itself is a political body and does not commend itself to all orthodox Jews. Complaints are frequent that the Vaad is swayed by political rather than educational considerations and that the progress of schools is hindered thereby."[38]

Note here the ease with which the High Commissioner distinguishes between political and pedagogic considerations—a key tenet of colonial education discourse that elides the Mandate government's own transgression of this boundary. Yet the letter is nevertheless overcome with a sense of befuddlement that Palestine's official Jewish religious community discouraged religious education. Adding to the trouble, numerous Orthodox schools from the Old Yishuv were ineligible for government support because they were not considered part of the official Jewish community. As one official from the Colonial Office summarized the situation following a meeting with members of Agudat Israel, "It was inequitable that in the Holy Land the Community of Orthodox Jews were, by reason of their religious convictions, treated as of less importance than the large immigrant population introduced into Palestine by the Zionist movement."[39]

---

[38] Ibid.
[39] Oranborne to Colonial Office. Summary of meeting with deputation from Agudat Israel, October 23, 1942. TNA, CO 733/435/18.

As a solution, MacMichael proposed to extend direct aid to the schools of Agudat Israel and those serving "Oriental Jews" who were underserved by the Va'ad Leumi. For the 1941-42 school year, the government distributed LP 4,200 in direct aid to schools maintained by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Agudat Israel, and local committees in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Tiberias and Yavneh. Though the sum in question was relatively small, the High Commissioner voiced support for increasing these grants in coming years in pursuance of a policy whose main aim was "to secure secular efficiency in the religious schools and a more religious spirit in the secular schools. A single Jewish system of public education may then be gradually formed under a more unified but more tolerant and varied control than the Vaad Leumi has yet learnt to exercise."[40] Responding to the dispatch, the Colonial Office noted satisfaction with the Mandatory Government's approach and voiced full support of its attempt to evolve a single system of Jewish education with a more "religious spirit."[41]

MacMichael was merely putting into action the Education Director's longstanding desire to combat the secularism of the Hebrew Public System as a means of reform. Thus, for example, in Farrell's 1939 letter to the Department of Education of the Va'ad Leumi in which he made a series of recommendations, he stressed the rights of "parents of strong religious sentiment" to secure for their children "not only proper instruction in faith, morals and ritual, but also secular teaching in a religious atmosphere." Furthermore, "the gap between the denominational [i.e. Mizrachi] and the general schools should be closed by the

[40] Ibid.
[41] Oranborne to High Commissioner MacMichael, October 23, 1942. TNA, CO 733/435/18.

encouragement of religious instruction in these latter schools too. This instruction may follow a more modern syllabus than that of the denominational schools but will accept the religious basis for conduct."[42] An editorial in *Palestine Review* published in response to the letter cheered that, "the religious authorities should rejoice that they have found so doughty a champion outside their own ranks."[43]

While grants to schools maintained by Agudat Israel may have been in part politically motivated, there is evidence that the Department sought more than simply to strengthen the position of the Va'ad Leumi's rival. For instance, the Department rejected Agudat Israel's attempt to act as an intermediary in distributing grants to a number of private *ḥederim* and *talmudei-torah*. Deploying the language of administrative efficiency the Department was known to favor, Rabbi Blau of Agudat Yisrael argued in a letter to Farrell that, "such centralization [of orthodox education under their control] would no doubt improve education itself, and would also most probably be welcomed by yourself, Sir, as they would serve to centralize the control of the schools concerned through the cooperation between your Department and the Education Department of Agudath Israel."[44]

In response to the request, S. D. Goitein noted that a number of the schools Agudat Israel proposed to include in its network were "*talmudei torah* for Oriental children" with "no spiritual connection" to Agudat Israel (original emphasis). Goitein rebuffed Agudat Israel's attempt to represent schools of this type in a newly centralized scheme, noting, "It would be more beneficial to consider these schools in connection

[42] Farrell to the Chairman and Executive Education Committee of the Va'ad Leumi, June 13, 1939. Reprinted in *Palestine Review*, Vol. IV, No. 35. March 29, 1940.
[43] "Notes and Comments," *Palestine Review*, Vol. IV, No. 35. March 29, 1940.
[44] Rabbi M. Blau to W.J. Farrell, September 18, 1942. ISA RG8, 1057/23/mem.

with the other institutions for Oriental children assisted by us so far in Jerusalem, than to tie them up with Aguda, which would involve unnecessary obstacles to reform."[45]

If the primary purpose of extending government aid was to encourage education reform, what were the features of this reformist agenda? In a fashion that mirrored their efforts regarding the transformation of *katātīb* into public elementary schools, the Department of Education seized on the *ḥederim* and *talmudei-torah* of the Old Yishuv as sites for hygienic, pedagogic and curricular transformation. "Is there no way of compelling the man to improve conditions at least insofar as this can be done without expenses, such as keeping the rooms, the latrine, himself, and the children clean and doing something useful with them?"[46] The question, posed by one government inspector after visiting the *talmud-torah* of Rabbi Ovadya Eliahu, was illustrative of prevailing attitudes toward the "old-fashioned" Orthodox schools, which, similar to the *katātīb,* were regarded as filthy, poorly staffed, and pedagogically backward. As was the case with the latter, the Department of Education aimed not at the eradication of religious schools, but their transformation into clean, rationally administered institutions that would retain the centrality of religious instruction while introducing additional subjects to encourage the embrace of "productive" professions.

Schools that were located within private dwellings, had insufficient ventilation, lacked drinking taps, working toilets, playgrounds or furnishings were

[45] S.D. Goitein, "New Schools to be admitted to the Aguda System." August 16, 1942. ISA RG8, 1057/23-mem.
[46] Untitled inspection report, November 23, 1946. ISA RG8, 1053/8-mem.

bound to clash with the Department of Education, whose authority over private (un-aided) religious schools was limited to ensuring they registered with the government and met its hygienic standards. The latter were ideally conceived and had little relation to the realities of the Palestinian schoolhouse, particularly among the poverty-stricken Orthodox Jews that made up the Old Yishuv. In extreme cases, the Director of Education ordered the closure of non-compliant schools, preferring no education to one conducted in unsavory conditions.

While the majority of interactions between the Department and Orthodox schools related to the government's sanitary requirements, the Department was equally interested in promoting curricular and pedagogic reforms. Many of the suggested reforms complemented contemporary Zionist critiques of the "old" educational model, such as the insistence that lessons focus on those sections of the Hebrew Bible deemed appropriate for a child's sensibility. General subjects were not meant to challenge the primacy of religious instruction, but rather to prepare children to be economically useful members of modern society. As earlier suggested in our discussion of *katātīb*, we must distinguish between the utilitarian use of secular education and secularism; while the former was to be heartily embraced, the latter was not a model to be emulated by colonial subjects. A few case studies will help elucidate the patterns that characterized the Department of Education's interactions with Orthodox schools.

Model students and repeat offenders

There are notably few instances of praise for (non-Zionist) Orthodox schools in the Department of Education's records. On the whole, the Director and the Jewish inspectorate agreed with the prevailing view that saw them as sorely in need of hygienic and pedagogic reform. Similarly, the Va'ad Leumi characterized the vast majority of *talmudei-torah* and *ḥederim* as existing in "lowly condition, both in the context of the sanitary conditions that prevail within them and the educational status."[47] Echoing this sentiment, an editorial in the Hebrew daily, *Ha-aretz*, further lamented the continued survival of such antiquated schools, which offered "an education that is insufficient for the general good, and particularly the national good."[48]

There were, however, notable exceptions, which the Department of Education eagerly supported as a means of promoting a new form of "traditional" Jewish education. Such was the case of the Jerusalem girls' school founded by Rabbi Altschuler, which began receiving government aid in the late 1920s. Though it catered to Orthodox families, the school "differs from the old traditional girls' school" in "curriculum, method and school organization." Described as very clean and orderly, the school displayed the other hallmarks of modernization: "there is a definite time-table; attendance registries are properly kept; recesses are well arranged." Though a government inspection report noted that teachers were largely lacking in higher education or pedagogic training, the Department nevertheless

[47] *Hanhalat ha-va'ad ha-leumi* to District Commissioner, Jerusalem. April 8, 1935. ISA RG8, 1016/1-mem.
[48] "Batei sefer ha-amamiyim b'yerushaliyim l'or ha-tzrachim," *Ha-aretz*, August 30, 1938.

looked favorably upon the school and viewed the government's support as a means to implement further reforms: "Though the school falls slightly below the general elementary standard and is not entirely efficient I would strongly recommend that it be given a grant-in-aid. The school, being perhaps the only one of this very desirable type, deserves encouragement, and the more control we can exercise over it the better."[49]

Similarly, the inspectorate offered qualified praise to the *talmud-torah* maintained by *histadrut he-ḥaredim* (the Federation of Haredi Jews), "one of the best talmud torahs," and deemed it worthy of both government and municipal aid.[50] Housed in a large, modern building, it was one of the few schools of this type to receive the stamp of approval from the Palestine Health Department. Moreover, the Department of Education approved of its curriculum, which included Hebrew, Arithmetic, Geography, Science, History and English among its "lay subjects." The school even devoted three to four weekly hours to the prophetic writings, undoubtedly "as a sop to those of 'modern' views on education."[51] This represented a departure from the custom in most *talmudei-torah*, in which the Torah was the only portion of the Hebrew Bible studied in some detail, and this only as a stepping-stone to more advanced oral commentaries. While such a curriculum was undoubtedly a relative novelty in historical terms, the school's founder, *histadrut he-*

[49] Avinoam Yellin, "Report: Bait Hinnukh Yeladim." November 4, 1926. ISA RG8, 1034 mem.
[50] "T.T. Histadrut Haredeim, Tel Aviv." February 10, 1941. ISA RG8, 1060/39-mem.
[51] Ibid.

ẖaredim, labeled itself nothing other than "the voice of true, pure Judaism (*ha-yahadut ha-amitit v'ha-tzerufah*)."[52]

On the opposite end of the spectrum were schools that served children from *edot ha-mizrach*, i.e. Jewish communities from Sephardic, North African, Middle Eastern or Central Asian origin. From the outset of the Mandate, education among *edot ha-mizraẖ* had proved a thorn in the side of Zionist educators, who explicitly aimed at the creation of *dor ahid*, a uniform generation of schoolchildren whose homogenization was deemed essential to the national project. "The Jews who are returning to Palestine come, literally, from the four corners of the earth and speak many diverse languages," wrote the Director of the Department of Education of the Jewish Agency in 1930. "The restoration of Hebrew," in which the new schools played so central a role, was thus "not only a romantic venture." To the contrary, it was "the instrument of Jewish unification."[53] While communities from *edot ha-mizraẖ* did not typically express the same ideological opposition as the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv to the inclusion of secular subjects in school curricula, they nevertheless desired to maintain their native languages and a distinct sense of *edah* identity rather than assimilating to the "universal" Zionist model.[54] As a result of extreme neglect from Zionist educational bodies, and a lack of donations from communities

---

[52] "*Alon shel histadrut he-haredim b'tev aviv*." June 9, 1933. ISA RG8, 1060/39-mem.
[53] I.B. Berkson, *The Zionist School System* (Jerusalem: Department of Education of the Jewish Agency for Palestine 1930).
[54] Elboim-Dror, *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*. Volume 2: 228-241. It is here noteworthy that the term *edah* itself, usually meant to denote a Jewish community from a specific region, i.e. the Iranian *edah,* appears to have undergone its own transformation during the Mandate period as the Zionist Organization promoted the notion of a unified Jewish nation. By the late 1930s, the term *"ha-edah ha-yehudit"* (The Jewish *edah*) entered circulation, suggesting an attempt to overturn the particularistic undertones usually associated with the term. See, for example, *hanhalat ha-va'ad ha-leumi* to Chief Secretary of the Government, August 10, 1939. ISA RG8, 1016/1-mem.

abroad similar to those that supported Ashkenazi institutions, schools serving children from *edot ha-mizraḥ* were among the poorest in Mandate Palestine. Reflecting this fact, the vast majority of Jewish children without access to *any* formal education came from these communities.[55]

Depending on one's perspective, Jews from Eastern communities were either the living embodiment of ancient Judaism, or a force that destabilized the Zionist attempt to render Jews modern (i.e. white, European, secular). S.D. Goitein was a member of the former camp. In a 1953 article, he argued that Yemenite Jews "remain very much the same as they had been at the end of the Talmudic period," and contrasted the Yemenite Jew as a member of 'Homo Religiosus' to modern man. Thus while "we belong to the type of 'Homo Economicus', whose aim it is to achieve a good life for himself and the greatest possible number of his fellowmen, the Yemenite represents 'Homo Religiosus' who is preoccupied with the salvation of his soul and the souls of those for whom he feels responsible." In this he was not unlike Jews, even European ones, from generations past: "If we disregard outward appearances, we shall find that the personality of the Yemenite Jew does not essentially differ from that of the Jew of Eastern Europe, Hungary or Southern Germany generations ago. What makes the Yemenite seem 'strange' to us is the fact that he has remained true to the ancient Jewish tradition."[56]

Conversely, Zionist teachers and headmasters expressed concern at the corrupting influences of Jews from Eastern communities. Letters to the Department

[55] M. Brill, *The School Attendance of Jewish Children in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press Association 1941).
[56] Goitein, "Jewish Education in Yemen as an archetype of traditional Jewish education," 109-10.

of Education of the Jewish Agency, and later, the Va'ad Leumi, about the "Yemenite problem" or the "Kurdish question" were not uncommon. For instance, one headmaster complained about "a bothersome question, the problem of the Kurdish children" in his school:

> This problem is an obstacle that stalls our work in the school. Their lack of education in the home and their dwelling in an Arab village appears to damage their virtues (*midot*) and corrupt the rest of the students in the school that play [with them], and who are fed the poor values that they introduce into the school… We strive to treat them in a special manner and we hope we will succeed. But our success will increase only when they move out of the village and come dwell close to Jews.[57]

In this instance, the Kurdish Jews did not represent a more authentic or primitive form of Judaism, but rather, by existing in uncomfortable proximity to Palestinian Arabs, they constituted the seeds of corruption that threatened to undermine the Zionist endeavor.

The position of Yemenite Jews in Palestine offers a particularly compelling example as to how these communities became situated on the receiving end of overlapping British and Zionist attempts to reform communal education. Yemenite schools were notoriously underserved during both the Ottoman and British periods. Immediately following the First World War, petitions lamented the neglect and gross indifference of Zionist leaders to Yemenite education, despite the high value the Yemenite community itself seemed to place on the education of their children.[58] Several years later, the material conditions of Yemenite schools had hardly improved:

---

[57] Eliezer Cohen to M. Lifshitz, "*sekira al avodat beit ha'sefer*," 1924. CZA J1\7970\2.
[58] See, for example, "Appeal for Support for Education of Yemenite Children," April 30, 1919. CZA S2\398\1.

> On 26th October, 1926, I paid a casual visit to the Yemenite Talmud-Torah 'Torah-Or'… The school is of the usual Yemenite kuttab type, where only religious subjects are taught, and very old-fashioned methods employed. The sanitary conditions are unsatisfactory. The rooms are badly ventilated and lighted, and were found dirty. No drinking water arrangements at all, latrines not sufficient; no furniture of any description, except for some very bad benches.[59]

At the time of the inspector's visit, the school was unregistered with the Department of Education and operating under the auspices of Agudat Israel. Numerous letters demanding that the latter body register the school and arrange for its inspection by a medical officer yielded no results, until finally the Yemenite community registered it as an independent organization.[60]

Unsurprisingly, the government medical officer found the school "unfit from a sanitary point of view," based on various deficiencies including the lack of toilets, running water and a playground. Humphrey Bowman therefore ordered the Deputy District Commissioner of Jerusalem to close the school.[61] In response to the pleas from Yemenite community leaders—and a promise that they would work in earnest to locate a more suitable building for the school—the Department allowed the school to reopen for a two-week period. Two months passed before it was discovered that "the Yemenite Community have not kept their promise," and Bowman ordered the school closed yet again.[62] These two closures over a three-month period, with the corresponding bargaining between representatives from the Yemenite community and the Department of Education, marked the beginning of a

---

[59] Yellin note, dated November 8, 1926. ISA RG8, 1034/9-mem.
[60] See for instance, Letter no. 2575, Director of Education to Secretary of Central Agudat Israel, November 26, 1926. Ibid. After several notices, Agudat Israel claimed to have transferred control to the Yemenite community, which registered the school as an independent entity. See, "Form of Application for permission to open a School," December 5, 1926. ISA RG8, 1034/9-mem.
[61] Director of Education to Deputy District Commissioner, Jerusalem, December 23, 1926. Ibid.
[62] Director of Education to Deputy District Commissioner, Jerusalem, March 4, 1927. Ibid.

recurring pattern that would characterize relations between the two parties for years to come.

The assumption that education could only occur under specific sanitary conditions, and in a place specifically designated as a school, underpinned the Department of Education's sanitary policies and contrasted sharply with customary forms of religious education. In one instance, the Senior Medical Officer rejected a possible location for the Yemenite school due to the fact that the landlord's living quarters were within the same dwelling.[63] Synagogues, which had frequently housed schools, were also suspect. Upon inspecting a synagogue that was the proposed space in which to reopen Torah-Or, the medical officer noted that "the pillows or cushions on the benches, used by the congregation, will have to be removed when the school functions, as they are liable to carry vermin." Latrine were also needed, both "as being the only way of introducing a little order and cleanliness in this dirty and unwholesome spot" and as a means of bureaucratic training: "the people really must be taught not to transgress P.H.D. [Palestine Health Department] orders."[64]

Meanwhile, the leaders of Torah-Or engaged in a number of tactics to prevent school closures or at least mitigate their effects. When, for example, the original school was closed in the spring of 1927, the community seems to have simply re-opened it in a different quarter without informing the government. Similarly, letters from the Yemenite community promising to undertake sanitary repairs at some future date proved effective, at least temporarily. The community also deployed

[63] Note from Sgd. J.L.B, September 10, 1928. ISA RG8 1034/9-mem – 48.
[64] Memorandum from Senior Medical Officer, Feb. 22, 1929. ISA RG8 1034/9-mem.

language that almost certainly capitalized on British anxiety about unsupervised youth, noting in one petition that were it not for the school, scores of Yemenite children would wander the streets (*histovevu b'ḥutzot*) without purpose.[65]

For their part, government inspectors criticized the "old-fashioned" teachers and narrow curriculum. As a partial remedy, the Department of Education looked favorably upon negotiations in 1937 to absorb the school into the Mizrachi system:

> "This Talmud Torah…used to be maintained by the Committee of the Yemenite Community in Jerusalem. The Talmud-Torah was then conducted on the lines of the old fashioned Talmudi-Torah, in which nothing but religious subjects are taught. Negotiations were recently conducted between the Mizrachi and the Yemenite Committee with a view of absorbing the two branches of the school….The Yemenites agreed to the teaching of certain secular subjects, and the Mizrachi had to put with up the teaching of certain religious subjects by old fashioned Yemenite teachers. The result is a good step forward in transforming the old-fashioned and extremely orthodox Talmud-Torah into a more or less regular Talmud-Torah of the Mizrachi type….the experiment deserves encouragement in as much as the pupils now attending the Talmud-Torah will get some secular education, whereas in the old Talmud-Torah they had no chance of getting any at all."[66]

School attendance forms for later years confirm that the *talmud torah* was indeed administered by Mizrachi, and from this point forward teachers appointed by the Va'ad Leumi oversaw a revised curriculum that included Hebrew, arithmetic, drawing and singing. Physical training and nature study were "not tolerated at all, but the teachers are attempting to touch some of the subject matter in the Hebrew and other lessons."[67]

Similar patterns occurred with regard to numerous schools serving children from *edot ha-mizraḥ*, and in many of these instances the Department of Education

---

[65] Petition to Director of Education of the Government of Palestine from Yemenite community, Jerusalem. August 16, 1927. Ibid.
[66] "Inspection note on Talmud-Tora 'Tora Or' for Yemenites." 12/14/1937. Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

facilitated the eventual absorption of schools into the Mizrachi system. Such was the case for *talmuei torah* serving Iraqi, Assyrian, and Anatolian Jewish communities. They were often deemed pedagogically backward institutions—"the teacher…does not know Hebrew. He teaches letters with vowels according to the method [used in] kuttabs"—supervised by school committees that were "obstinate and incompetent."[68] In each instance the solution was the same: "I see no possibility for further development if they do not get substantial help from the Va'ad Leumi Dept. in the future."[69] More specifically, the Jewish inspectorate felt that "only a supervisory authority like Mizrachi is able to bridge the ethnic factionalism" (*ligshor al ha-pitzul ha-edati*),[70] i.e. help assimilate communities from *edot ha-mizraḥ* into a "standard" form of Jewish education.

In a similar vein, Goitein grew frustrated with the rabbis who supervised *talmud-torah* Torat Aharon, which served Jerusalem's Babylonian community. The rabbis rebuffed Goitein's suggestion that the school employ a married woman as a teacher for the first grade, stating that Maimonides had forbidden such a practice. Goitein attempted to counter this argument by stating that Maimonides also forbade a bachelor from teaching boys, and yet the school employed no shortage of the latter. The rabbis claimed that the legal ruling itself, the *halacha*, was beside the point; the community would not consent to a female teacher in the school.

---

[68] Both quotes are taken from discussions regarding Talmud Torah Urphalim, a Jewish community from Eastern Anatolia. See S.D. Goitein, "Final Allocation of Grants to Jerusalem Orthodox Schools for the School Year 1945-46," November 30, 1945; and, Inspection report for Talmud Torah Urphalim," and S.D. Goitein, *Talmud torah shel ha-Urphalim, Yerushaliyim, Bikur b'yom 1 b'April 1946*, April 1, 1946. ISA RG8, 1057/24-mem.

[69] S.D. Goitein, "Final Allocation of Grants to Jerusalem Orthodox Schools for the School Year 1945-46," November 30, 1945. Ibid.

[70] Joseph Goldschmidt, *Talmud torah Ashurim shechonat Zichron Ya'akov,* October 29, 1946. Ibid.

Exasperated, Goitein could only conclude his minute by stating that, in his opinion, "Mizrachi will have greater power to safeguard the religious character," cast here as an adherence to *halachic* textualism rather than the actual practices of the Jewish community.[71] As Goitein's letter suggests, it was precisely by abandoning the customs of the *edah* that these communities could come to represent Judaism in its more "authentic" form.

These efforts on behalf of the Department of Education found corollaries in Zionist educators' tendency to view the education of children from *edot ha-mizraḫ* as a means of separating them from the languages and manners of the home. As Rachel-Elboim Dror's work on Hebrew education following World War I has shown, the newly empowered Zionist Organization struggled to deal with pupils who home environment was "foreign in wisdom and spirit" to that of the school. "What the school repairs, the home removes."[72] It is worth noting the discursive parallels between these efforts and those developed in the Department of Education's dealings with rural Arab society, which, as I argued in Chapter Four, could only be preserved in its "traditional" form by removing children from the usual sites of cultural transmission.

Regarding curricular reform, the Department of Education's inspectors frequently advised teachers and administrators of Orthodox schools regarding subject matter and pedagogic practices. Here, Department officials pursued a path that complemented the modernist revolt against an education wholly devoted to

[71] S.D. Goitein, *pegisha im va'adat ha-rabanim shel Talmud Torah Torat Aharon*. October 14, 1947. Ibid.
[72] Elboim-Dror, *ha-ḫinuch ha-ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*: Vol. II; 243.

"religious" subjects. While the Department of Education did not endorse any Zionist educational stream, administrators seemed to have the most sympathy with Mizrachi's attempt to create a dual curriculum that included both religious and general subjects. Certainly, the attempt to channel schools from *edot ha-mizraḥ* into the Mizrachi system suggests that the latter was regarded as the lesser of many evils.

In this respect, it is useful to consider a 1942 report by the inspector J.L. Bloom, in which he relayed the details of his meeting with the chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and a Mizrachi representative of the Jewish Agency. The report suggested an ambitious plan that was illustrative of the Department's goal of achieving "secular efficiency" in Orthodox schools. Describing an "argument of importance" relayed to him with which "we all agree," Bloom asserted, "the study of Talmud to be of value has to be done after say the age of 12." It therefore followed, "Talmud Torahs, which are differentiated from other schools by the amount of Talmud taught, are not justifiable for children under 13. Children under that age should attend decent religious schools, where the religious element would be represented by Pentat. [Pentateuch] with Rashi, Bible, Mishnah and beginnings of Talmud. After that, the gifted boys should transfer to decent talmud torahs or "small" yeshivas."[73] These "small yeshivas" were "to be run on lines consonant with present day requirements," effectively meaning that they would feature a basic general curriculum alongside the usual sacred texts and commentaries. Bloom noted that S.D. Goitein also advocated this line of action, and concluded his memo on a hopeful

[73] Minute from J.L. Bloom to Director of Education, August 17, 1942. ISA RG8, 1057/23/mem.

note. "The grant at our disposal may serve as a lever in bringing about a reform in religious education."[74]

At the same time that Bloom envisioned reformed *yeshivot* with diversified curricula, he also supported the extension of more rigorous religious studies into General Zionist schools. Told of an existing program that dispatched members of *reshet ha-ẖinuch ha-talmudi* (Organization of Talmudic Education) to teach Talmud in Mizrachi schools, Bloom responded that "it would be more to the point if they were sent to General [Zionist] schools" and promised to investigate whether the Department of Education would be willing to extend a grant to further these efforts.[75] While it is unclear from the records if this plan reached fruition, the willingness to recommend government funding for Talmudic studies in a memorandum addressed to the Director of Education is noteworthy in its own right. Taken together, the report expresses the two pillars of the Department's reform agenda: ""to secure secular efficiency in the religious schools and a more religious spirit in the secular schools."[76]

Finally, administrators attempted to transform the way that religious subjects themselves were taught, though here they had admittedly less leverage. The payment of government grants depended on the adoption of a minimal secular curriculum, and suggestions regarding the manner in which religious subjects were taught were merely advisory. Nevertheless, the nature of these suggestions are useful in understanding the type of reforms that the Department envisioned, and the

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] High Commissioner MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies. August 14, 1942. TNA, CO 733/435/18.

extent to which they overlapped with ongoing attempts within Jewish modernist circles. Of primary importance was an expanded place for the Hebrew Bible in the school curriculum. The customary educational order had used the Torah as a pedagogic tool for acquiring knowledge of the Hebrew language, and devoted little if any attention to the other books in the Bible. Within such a setting, familiarity with the Torah served as a stepping-stone to learning the oral traditions recorded in the Mishnah and Talmud, which formed the true center of the curriculum. The revolt against the Talmud in favor of renewed attention on the Hebrew Bible began with the *Haskalah*, continued through the scholarly ventures associated with the rise of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany, and reached a fevered pitch in the Zionist embrace of the Hebrew Bible as a textbook of Jewish political and cultural history.

The revolt against commentary was thus the other side of the embrace of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible as the true foundations of the Jewish nation, the vessels that had preserved its ancient *kultur* and that united Jews from across political and geographic spectrums. "We have one language and one Tanakh [Hebrew Bible], one history and one homeland."[77] Conversely, Zionist educators held that extensive Talmudic study "created an atmosphere of diasporic inertia in the midst of a period that was distinguished precisely by national and ideological independence."[78] Even Rashi's commentary on the Torah, which had long served as an indispensible aid, was fair game for those who desired an unmediated relationship with the ancient text. In the words of Eliezer Riger—among the founders of *ha-shomer ha-tzair* who later served in the Department of Education of

[77] Moshe Aharon Bejel, untitled, undated memorandum (most likely 1940-1941). CZA J17\4996.
[78] Reshef, *ha-ḫinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 63.

the Va'ad Leumi—however impressive from an intellectual perspective, Rashi's commentary nevertheless "serves as a barrier (*meḫitza*) that separates our children from the Torah, this at the time that they have a direct and natural relationship to the Torah and what is written there."[79]

What was unique, then, about the Department of Education's recommendations regarding the reform of Orthodox educational models was not their content, but the harnessing of them to a professional language that claimed to speak in the name of pedagogic necessity. Discrediting educational traditions evolved over several centuries, Department officials scoffed at the use of "incorrect" Hebrew, the reading of the Torah out of order, neglect of the prophetic writings, and the inclusion of subject matter deemed inappropriate for immature sensibilities.[80] Such efforts found parallels in Zionist schools, where "the portions of Tanakh that include things that are not suitable for children's spirit will dropped."[81] What connected these points—both to one another and to the larger reform effort undertaken by the Department—was, that, in order to gain access to Judaism's essential core, religious education must be carried out in a novel fashion. Connecting the child with this Jewish authenticity was thereby dependent on a number of departures from traditional educational practices.

---

[79] Eliezer Riger, *Ha-ḫinuch ha-ivri b'eretz yisrael* (Tel Aviv1940), 46.
[80] The inspection reports for *talmudei-torah* and *ḫederim* offer numerous examples in this regard; see, for instance, ISA RG8, 1057/24-mem, which includes Avinoam Yellin, "Report: Bait Hinnukh Yeladim." November 4, 1926; S.D. Goitein, "Talmud torah shel ha-Urphalim, Yerushaliyim, Bikur b'yom 1 b'April 1946," April 1, 1946. See also, S.D. Goitein to Talmud-Torah Megen David, September 27, 1945. ISA RG 8, 1034/14-mem.
[81] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-hanhala ha-tzioni b'eretz yisrael, *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim* (Jerusalem 1923-23), 20.

In closing this discussion, we should note that this attitude toward Orthodox Jewish schools was not something that existed in a vacuum. However unexpected—particularly given the prevalence of studying Palestine through the "dual society" model—these policies found corollaries in the approach we examined toward rural Arab education. In particular, administrators attempted to preserve the central place of religious education—again of a "reformed" type—while introducing new subjects that were deemed more economically useful given "present day requirements." Only within such a schema could religious education counteract the dangerous creep of national politics or the "anti-religious racialism" of the Zionist leadership. These points of overlap challenge the historiographical tendency to treat Arab and Jewish education as unrelated entities. Speaking in institutional terms, they clearly represented separate realms; however we should not take this to mean that these school systems existed without intersections at either the discursive or material levels. Rather, reformers within both communities shared the Department of Education's assumption that cultural and religious authenticity was something that could only be imparted away from the family and the customary paths of transmission. Only then could the modern school become a vehicle for inculcating a "traditional" education free from the adverse influence of actual religious communities.

Religion at Large

From what has been said thus far, one might be led to believe that the Mandate period marked the apex of secular Jewish education. Certainly Farrell's

accusations against the Hebrew Public System suggest the waning of a religious worldview, as do scholarly works that speak of Zionist education as being a predominately secular project. For Mizrachi educators, who were often on the fringes of the ruling elite, Zionist education bodies like the Board of Education (*va'ad ha-ḫinuch*) and the Department of Education (*maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch*) appeared bent on undermining the religious spirit of schools. Letters of complaint claimed discrimination against parents who desired an Orthodox upbringing for their children, particularly in agricultural settlements, where "the hearts of these fathers and mothers ache and worry greatly over the lack of religious education."[82]

Following the end of World War I, Mizrachi issued a list of demands regarding religious education that reflected this mistrust of the Zionist leadership, insisting that its control be centralized under an autonomous authority "to defend the internal spiritual character of ḫaredi [i.e. Orthodox] education against all sorts of uninvited 'helpers' and 'leaders' from the outside." It was, the report specified, the current Board of Education and in particular, Dr. Yosef Luria, which had strengthened their conviction that religious education must be safeguarded under Mizrachi control. The party therefore requested authority to bypass the Board of Education altogether and deal with the Zionist Executive directly.[83] The Zionist Organization did in fact take steps to appease Mizrachi in this regard, and in 1920, it granted pedagogic autonomy to religious schools and transferred responsibility for Jewish religious education in Palestine to Mizrachi authorities.[84]

---

[82] Haim Dov to va'ad ha-mefakeaḫ al batei ha-ḫinuch shel ha-ḫaredim. Dec. 25, 1918. CZA S2\398\1.
[83] *Tazhir al odot drishot 'ha-mizrahi' b'nogea la'ḫinuch ha-ḫaredi*, 1919. CZA S2\398\1.
[84] Reshef, *ha-ḫinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 18.

However, a critical evaluation of the sources casts doubt on the extent to which we can accurately speak of this period as one of a decline in religious education; more importantly, such an exercise shifts questions about religiosity to a conceptual field that interrogates the significance of "secular" and "religious" as forms of Jewish identity. Speaking purely in institutional terms, the "anti-religious" schools of the Labor movement only included a minority of children in the Hebrew Public System. The vast majority attended either General or Mizrachi schools, which used common syllabi for subjects such as history and geography, and devoted substantial time to studying both the Jewish textual tradition and elements of ritual practice.[85] The differences between the two trends was, in the words of Dr. Luria, the study of Talmud on one hand, and compulsion on the other:

> The difference between ḥaredi [e.g., Mizrachi] elementary schools and General ones is that in the first, much time is given to the study of the Talmud, which they begin in the fourth year and to which they dedicate 10 hours weekly in each class. On account of this they are compelled to minimize general studies, especially nature subjects, singing, drawing and physical exercise. There is yet another distinction and it is – the relationship to the practical obligations (*drishot ma'asiot*) of religion. Indeed in General schools students also learn prayer, in several they also study the *Shulḥan Arech*, *Oreach Haim* and in several settlements it is customary to find communal prayer in the schools, but the education of children in carrying out positive commandments is not part of the General schools and they relate to this as to something that is transmitted to the heart of each [student] from his parents.[86]

While, as the above quotation indicates, General and Mizrachi schools featured much curricular overlap, there has been a tendency to only regard the latter system

[85] In 1929-30, there were 1,506 pupils in Labor schools vs. 6,392 in Mizrachi and 13,133 in General schools. Education, *Annual Report 1929-1930*: 30. Even after the relative growth of Labor school enrollment, the movement still only accounted for approximately 24% of Hebrew Public System students at the end of the Mandate period. Additionally, it is worth noting that when considered into relation to the total number of Jewish schoolchildren (i.e. including those educated in predominately Orthodox schools outside the Va'ad Leumi network), the percentage of children in Labor schools for 1945-46 drops to 19%. See Palestine, *Annual Report 1945-46*: 11; 13.

[86] Quoted in Reshef, *ha-ḥinukh ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*: 61-62.

as "religious" in nature. Certainly such thinking informed Farrell's perception of the Zionist school system as predominantly secular. However, assessing the validity of this claim depends in part upon how we identify and characterize "religious education" as it existed in the Hebrew Public System. This analysis can only begin to speak to this question. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that the very difficulty we face in isolating the "religious" element of Jewish education hints at the inadequacy of an approach that would treat religion and secularism as pre-existing categories into which a curriculum, school or community could unproblematically fit.

As an alternate interpretation, I would like to suggest that the Zionist curricula points to what Talal Asad has termed a "reordering of religious priorities" that consciously blurred the boundaries between secular studies—*limudei ḥol*—and religious ones—*limudei kodesh*—in an attempt to articulate a new relationship between Jewishness and modern political identity. As Yitzhak Holtzberg, the chief inspector for Mizrachi schools, would later articulate it, "the ideal of religious education is that serving God and defending the sanctity of the Hebrew people must be the primary goal and must be emphasized in every lesson and in all studies, even in learning physical exercise and drawing."[87] Nor, as I shall show, was such an approach limited to the religious Zionist sphere, but rather, in varying ways, constituted the basic innovation of Zionist education as a whole. Not only does the concept of the secular explain nothing in this case, it actually functions to obscure

[87] Yitzhak Holtzberg, *ha-ḥinuch ha-dati k'ḥovat ha-horim v'ha-morim* (Jerusalem: Mizrahi World Center 1948).

the larger epistemic battles raging over the nature of modern Jewish identity and the role of education in its production.

In order to demonstrate these dynamics, I will here examine a few artifacts of Zionist education during this period and argue that they offer a stark conceptual contrast to the "protestant" approach to Islamic religious education evident in the government public schools. For the sake of comparative ease, I will again focus my analysis on the relationship between sacred and secular history. It is hoped that even this limited discussion will highlight the extent to which speaking of Zionist education in terms of its "secular" and "religious" components serves to obfuscate what was actually unusual about it, and what, in my opinion, brought it into conflict with the Mandatory government.

At the most basic level, religious subjects[88] continued to occupy a central place in the curriculum of every "stream" of the Hebrew Public System. The Va'ad Leumi stressed that each school shared certain common ground, constituted by the Hebrew Bible:

> A bare description of the three types of schools may convey several erroneous impressions: that the "General" and Labor schools are anti-religious; that only the Labor schools give instruction in practical activities; that the system is tripartite with only an external, administrative unity. All three assumptions are unwarranted. The Mizrachi, indeed, "consistently hold the religious viewpoint in education; religious education is not a matter of instruction in this or that subject, but implies an all-pervading outlook on life.'" But the "General" schools are by no manner of means anti-religious. They put the study of the Bible in a foremost place and do not omit the study of the Rabbinical literature, and they observe the traditional

[88] The term "religious subjects" is admittedly unsatisfactory. In this discussion, its use is meant as shorthand for the Hebrew Bible, Mishna, Talmud and associated works of commentary. It also includes instruction in elements of ritual practice, usually indicated in syllabi as *"tefilah,"* (prayer), "*dinim*" or *"halacha"* (law).

> customs…Likewise the Labor schools insist upon a good knowledge of the Bible. At most it may be said that their spirit is non-religious.[89]

As the Department of Education (*maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch*) of the Zionist Organization articulated its position earlier in the period, "The goal of the curriculum is for the student to be saturated in the Hebrew spirit though knowledge of language, Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) and Hebrew literature."[90]

In academic circles, the centrality of Tanakh in the curriculum is often explained by stressing that its subject matter was no longer connected to Jewish theology as such, but rather constituted a source text for the development of Hebrew nationalism, or in the above passage, the "Hebrew spirit." Several accounts of the period have suggested that Zionism re-signified certain Jewish ritual practices and incorporated them into a form of "civil religion" that "provides secularized people with a sense of ultimate meaning approximating that provided by religion."[91] Similarly, scholars have argued that labor Zionism in particular adopted "numerous symbols and practices from traditionalist Jewish religion but transformed and complemented them with universalist, largely Socialist, values."[92] It is my contention that, despite its merits, the "civil religion" explanation—which suggests an almost natural transition from religion to nationalism, parochialism to universal values, theology to secularism—leaves many questions not merely unanswered, but unasked.

---

[89] The Waad Leumi [sic] of Keneset Yisrael, *The Jewish Public School System of Palestine* (1932), 12.
[90] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch, "Sekirah al ha-ḫinuch be'eretz yisrael b'shnot 1920-1923." CZA J17\8536.
[91] Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*: 311. Other examples of work on Zionism that employ the concept of civil religion include Oz Almog, *The Sabra : the creation of the new Jew*, The S. Mark Taper Foundation imprint in Jewish studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew : the creation of a Jewish national culture in Ottoman Palestine*.
[92] Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*: 311.

It is therefore instructive to begin this analysis by interrogating our terminology, and asking which of the following subjects, taken from the General Zionist syllabus, should be considered "religious" in nature: Hebrew Bible, Hebrew language, Mishnah, geography, nature, history, mathematics, singing, drawing, gardening, exercise, English. Including only the obvious candidates—the Hebrew Bible and Mishnah—a student in the seventh class would devote approximately 20% of her class time to religious subjects. However, read in light of the unstable boundaries that separate the religious from the secular, parts of Hebrew language, geography, nature, history and singing might well be considered "religious" in nature, at which point such subjects would constitute approximately 65% of our student's total classroom hours.[93] There is a need to probe some concrete examples in order to demonstrate just how porous the boundaries between *limudei ḥol* and *limudei kodesh* could be.

Let us begin by looking at the history curriculum developed for use in Zionist schools. One prominent feature of this curriculum was the great extent to which the inclusion of general historical events and personalities hinged on their relation to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. In describing this new course of study, the Department of Education of the Zionist Organization summarized its position as follows: "In the study of geography, the homeland (*moledet*) stands at the center. Special attention must be paid to adjacent lands and to those that are most important to inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael. In [the study of] history, the syllabus privileges knowledge of Jewish history and the teacher is restricted to only those

[93] *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim*: 3

events in general history that are related to the history of our people."[94] As Shmuel Feiner has argued, this nationalist approach to the writing of history represented a change in direction from that pioneered by European *maskilim,* for whom the importance of history as a pedagogic tool was linked to its capacity to recount major events from and historical shifts occurring within the non-Jewish world.[95] In contrast, this passage reflects a framework in which other lands, peoples and events only become relevant through their contact with the Jewish people, cast here as the epicenter around which historical time revolves.

In a similar vein, the geography curriculum began by surveying the Land of Israel before moving outward to Mt. Sinai, "the road of the exodus from Egypt," and Babylonia, the first land of exile. In each instance, the place studied appears not precisely as an entity of independent interest, but of historical importance to the Jewish people.[96] Thus, when surveying Syria, the teacher is to stress "the economic and cultural relationship between it and Eretz Yisrael" and to discuss the Jewish communities of Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo.[97] For its part, the Mizrachi syllabus added that the survey of lands surrounding Eretz Yisrael should be done "in

[94] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch, "Sekirah al ha-ḫinuch be'eretz yisrael b'shnot 1920-1923." CZA J17\8536. This document appears to have been submitted to the Department of Education of the Government of Palestine (stamped July 17, 1923). The report itself is unsigned; however the general tone and detailed reporting give reason to believe it was written by the Education Department of the Zionist Executive.
[95] Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*.
[96] For an alternate interpretation of the history curriculum, see Dan Porat, "Between nation and land in Zionist teaching of Jewish history, 1920-1954 " *The Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008). Porat argues that the syllabus adopted Dubnov's idea of "shifting autonomous centers," leading to subject headings like "the Jews in Spain," and "the Jews in Babylon" rather than a overwhelming focus on the Land of Israel itself.
[97] *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim*: 29-30.

connection to what is taught about them in the Torah and the early prophets."[98] In the final year, students were to review "the value of Eretz Yisrael in our national and religious life; the new and old settlements (*yishuvim*), the races [in the land], the history of Eretz Yisrael from the Middle Ages until the days of the new yishuv, and the [religious] commandments that are dependent on the land."[99]

This narrative structure differed significantly from the curriculum developed for use in the Arab Public System, in which substantial attention was paid to European and American history while Palestine itself was presented in international terms as an object of perpetual conquest. While the Zionist curriculum in this regard may offer an example of what Jerome Farrell termed national chauvinism, it is perhaps more complicated than that—and ultimately in my view, points to a sort of theological residue in the practice of history as a national project.[100] In truth, this structure of historical narration may find its closest corollary in the Hebrew Bible itself, in which great Empires, rulers and peoples exist on the periphery of a story whose central object is the genealogy of the Israelites. The student of Tanakh would encounter, for instance, the ancient Egyptian or Persian kingdoms, and may glean something of their military or intellectual power. However such Empires do not stand as independent entities within the narrative structure of the Hebrew Bible, but rather, are only significant as agents who affect the formation and destiny of *bnei yisrael*.

---

[98] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-sokhnut ha-yehudit l'eretz yisrael, *tokhnit ha-limudim ha-nehugah b'vatei ha-sefer ha-amamiyim shel ha-mizraḫi* (1933), 19-20.
[99] Ibid., 18-19.
[100] That "secular" history often bears traces of a theological, specifically Christian, teleology is clear enough from Lowith's work. See, Lowith, *Meaning in History*. For a more detailed account of the historiographical practices that emerged among European *maskilim,* see Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*.

As is evident in these examples, there was a tendency for biblical events to migrate into the context of general history and vice versa. Indeed sacred and secular history were not meant to exist as independent realms of study, but rather served as complementary, mutually enforcing bodies of knowledge. This interpretation finds further support in reviewing the justification given for the study of history itself, namely "to awaken in the hearts of students an internal [sense of] participation in the fate of our nation and in the fate of the great members of the generations who have worked and suffered."[101] Articulating the same sentiment in more overtly theological terms, the Mizrachi syllabus states:

> Teaching our history in relation to the general history of nations brings the child to the realization that divine supervision uncovers historical paths for us in a special manner. The continued existence of our small and poor people in the midst of a great multitude of enormous nations, strong and steadfast nations, that despite their political and cultural strength have passed and gone, therefore creates an understanding of the strength of the Torah of Israel and the divine supervision (*hashgacha pratit*) that protects us. This realization is what creates a firm connection between the student and the nation of Israel and to Eretz Yisrael, the land of our people's birth and the soil of the law, the prophets, and the sages (*chazal*).[102]

In short, rather than existing in distinct ontological spheres separated either by time (ancient/modern) or content (ethical-universal/historical-national), the history curriculum developed in Zionist schools displayed two prominent features: First, it resembled the structure of Biblical narrative in striking ways; and second, secular history did not function outside of sacred history, but rather the two served to animate and legitimize one another. We should also note that this sort of curricular mingling was not limited to the historical and theological. Hence the qualification

---

[101] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-sokhnut ha-yehudit l'eretz yisrael, *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim*: 41.
[102] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-sokhnut ha-yehudit l'eretz yisrael, *tokhnit ha-limudim ha-nehugah b'vatei ha-sefer ha-amamiyim shel ha-mizraḫi* 20.

that mathematical questions should be drawn from the Torah and that Hebrew language class should include the prayer cycles used in synagogues on the Sabbath and holidays, even within General Zionist schools.

This mode of historiography was, in fact, a central feature of the new Jewish history writing that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century. Shmuel Feiner has argued that this nationalist historiography "played a key role in this process of transforming traditional terms and concepts, of secularizing, spiritualizing, and nationalizing 'Hebrew', 'Torah', 'religion', and 'commandments', which were appropriated and enshrined in the repertoire of national assets."[103] Intellectuals like Perez Smolenskin were likewise integral to articulating a new relationship between the Hebrew Bible and Jewish identity, one that looked to the texts as "a repository of memories that preserved Jewish historical roots."[104] It is therefore not surprising to find that, in the framework of the National Home project, this narrative structure took root in the Zionist educational system. What is surprising is the ease with which it has been uncritically described as secular, as if the processes of "secularizing, spiritualizing, and nationalizing" were self-explanatory.

To consider one final example of what I have labeled a reordering of religious priorities, it is worth considering the sanctification of land settlement and agricultural labor in Zionist schools.[105] Historians have noted Zionist attempts to

---

[103] Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*: 320.
[104] Ibid., 319.
[105] Here I must disagree with Porat's argument that General and Mizrachi schools did not emphasize the Land of Israel in an ideological fashion and did not aim to indoctrinate students in any particular political program. The absence of socialist ideas within the curricula did not render General or Mizrachi Zionist schools apolitical; Zionism itself already involved a very precise form of politics that

appropriate Jewish customs and holidays and reinvent them in ways that stressed their relationship to the material life of *Eretz Yisrael*. This intellectual current heavily influenced members of the Second *Aliyah* and found its purest voice in the figure of A.D. Gordon, for whom "labor was not only a rational value for the individual's expansion of self and his social relations," but also, "the key to a cosmic religious experience that bonds man to nature."[106] During the 1920s, a new generation of Hebrew poets such as Avraham Shlonsky continued to emphasize the essential dignity of labor as a force of spiritual renewal, often by appropriating Biblical language and ritual imagery only to overturn their classical meanings. [107] For instance, in one of his most famous works, "Amal" ("Toil"), newly built homes and roads are likened to phylacteries as the narrator is led to his morning labor in lieu of—or rather, as a form of—prayer. At times, the glorification of land and labor played dissonantly off of the existing corpus of Jewish ritual texts. For instance, in "Metropolis" Shlonksy concludes the poem by blessing "he who weighs his yoke upon us" (*baruch machbid olo aleinu*), offering a stark contrast with the customary supplication, "May the compassionate one break the yoke from our necks."[108]

Several of these discursive elements found their way into the Zionist mainstream—even if their revolutionary nature may have not been fully appreciated—through their incorporation into the educational programs of each

---

found expression in almost every element of the curricula (e.g. which Mishnayot were taught). See Porat, "Between nation and land in Zionist teaching of Jewish history, 1920-1954 " 258-61.

[106] Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*: 209.

[107] For an excellent analysis of the reciprocal relationship between the "redemption" of the land and the revival of the Jewish spirit, see Zakim, *To Build and Be Built: landscape, literature, and the construction of Zionist identity*

[108] Avraham Shlonsky, "Metropolis," part of the poem cycle, *Masa.* The latter quotation is taken from *birkat ha-mazon*, the traditional blessing recited after meals.

party. In fact, in the face of so much ideological controversy, the sanctification of land and labor represented a sort of common denominator: malleable enough that each "trend" could offer its own interpretive directions, stable enough that the symbolic fabric was not torn asunder. We could point to numerous examples of this tendency; for the purpose of this discussion, I will highlight here only a few.

The first involves a shift in discursive privilege within the study of the Jewish textual tradition. For instance, the upper two classes of General elementary schools studied Mishnah, the redaction of the oral law. In the seventh class, students studied five of the sixty-three sections of the Mishnah. The first was *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers), a compilation of ethical teachings and sayings that includes almost no legal rulings. The other four tractates—Bikkurim, Pe'ah, Shevi'it, and Brachot—were all selected from Mishnah Zera'im ("Seeds").[109] Specifically, Bikkurim deals with bringing the "first fruits" of the land as an offering at the Temple; Pe'ah discusses the laws of charity related to the harvest; Shevi'it addresses the laws related to the sabbatical year in which the land is allowed to rest; and Brachot offers guidelines surrounding major ritual prayers and blessings.

Taken as a group, these selections reflect many of the ideological shifts discussed thus far. Exposure to the major prayers and blessings was meant to familiarize students with Jewish ritual practice, echoing the administrative directive that prayers should be included in the Hebrew language curriculum "in order that the student will know them and understand their ethical value."[110] Similarly, the

[109] Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-hanhala ha-tzioni b'eretz yisrael, *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim*: 47.
[110] Ibid., 2.

emphasis on Pirkei Avot fit well within the modern attempt to locate the ethical core of "Judaism" as a singular entity.[111] Though the study of the text was not novel in and of itself, its study in isolation from the other texts of *halacha* was a departure from the customary order in which law, literature, ethics and practice constituted an organic whole.

Yet it is the three tractates taken from the agricultural portions of the Mishnah—which stressed the historic rootedness of the Jewish nation in the land of Israel—that commanded the most attention. Privileging these texts also meant leaving many others out, namely the central texts related to the laws of the Sabbath, the holidays (with the exception of Rosh Hashana), family and ritual purity, civil damages, the courts, marriage, divorce, idolatry, sacrifices and the Temple service. For sake of comparison, Mizrahi schools, whose curriculum adhered more closely to the customary selections of Mishnah studied among Ashkenazim, did not teach any of these agricultural tractates.[112]

Certainly this shift in discursive focus is noteworthy, yet the privileging of certain parts of the Jewish textual tradition need not be read as a shift from "religious" to "secular" Judaism. Rather, I find interpreting incidents like these through the lens of "civil religion"—in which all things religious can be naturally

---

[111] Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*.

[112] This is not to say that Mizrachi schools did not emphasize the importance of *Eretz Yisrael* and no contemporary observer of religious Zionism in Israel would be surprised to find that the corpus of Jewish texts offered no shortage of material that served this purpose. In the words of Rabbi Yakov Berman, who served as an inspector for Mizrachi schools from 1924-44, "The Hebrew Bible is the center of our study, and if it does not unfold in relation to Eretz Yisrael, we are not properly transmitting its content." It's noteworthy that Berman wrote these words in response to critics who worried that Zionism was not being sufficiently emphasized in Mizrachi schools, and therefore called for the introduction of a new prayer to fill the alleged void. Berman's response was telling, namely that "our prayers are full of love of the land and there is no need to add a new, distinct prayer." *Harza'ah ha-Rav Y. Berman*." 1923. CZA J1\7931.

transformed into the basis of modern, secular identity—problematic for two reasons. Just as the Jewish study of ethics was not a modern invention, but rather existed historically as an integral part of the study of law, we are not dealing with the invention of traditions as much as the privileging of some over others. The practice of making these choices is important and ultimately testifies to the flexibility of the Jewish hermeneutic tradition; it need not, however, be conflated with secularism. On the contrary, Zionist education was deeply invested in a stressing certain forms of religiosity, or perhaps more accurately, of creating a form of Jewish identity that confounded the modern notion of religion itself.

Secondly, as a theoretical concept embedded in a Christian discourse of secularism, civil religion comes with substantial explanatory limits. We might recall the term's origins in the political writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, in *On the Social Contract*, praised the ancients for whom religion was "uniquely tied to the laws of the state that prescribed it." Thus, he tells us, "Mohammad had very sound opinions. He tied his political system together very well, and as long as the form of his government subsisted under his successors, the caliphs, this government was utterly unified, and for that reason it was good." However, as "Christianity is a completely spiritual religion, concerned with things heavenly," Rousseau argued the state must develop a complementary form of civil religion to compel the populace to care for public concerns. This was, Rousseau tells us, because "the homeland of the Christian is not of this world."[113] Given that the Zionist homeland was very much of this world, of what use to the movement is a

[113] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On the Social Contract," in *The Basic Policial Writings, Second Edition*, ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. , 2011), 246-48.

civil religion meant to compensate for the otherworldly gaze of its true believers? Why then civil religion? Why not just religion? Or, perhaps, given the history of the latter term,[114] a new form of Jewishness?

In closing, is it possible to separate the religious and secular elements of this curriculum? Perhaps more importantly, who is asking, and for what purpose? The assumption that knowledge could be so divided—into history and theology, politics and religion—is not a neutral proposition. Within the curricula analyzed here, religious studies do not function primarily as vessels for individual ethical formation but as a platform for communal identity. They emphasize the particularity of the Jewish people and violate the Christian principle—which has found expression from St. Paul to Ernest Renan—that religions are not national. Departing then from the accepted wisdom that Zionist education represented either a secularizing impulse or a form of "civil religion," I have suggested that both of these explanations obscure the genuine novelty of the Zionist attempt to confound the distinction between the secular and the religious, an attempt that functions to highlight the historical contingency and theoretical limitations of these very categories.

Conclusion

Reviewing the curricula for history and geography illustrates how easily theological meanings could co-exist with, and even generate, historical narratives regarding the eternal connection between the Jewish people and the land – with the

[114] "Secularism is a name Christianity gave itself when it invented religion, when it named its other or others as religions." Anidjar, "Secularism," 62.

corresponding political implications. Yet, in the face of strong government opposition to the inclusion of "politics" in the classroom, there seems to have been no serious attention paid to the ease with which Jewish "religious" studies could be politicized. On the contrary, the Director of Education repeatedly asserted that the Zionist schools had fallen into a sort of "racial self-worship" *because* they were not adequately religious.[115] Clearly Jerome Farrell had a different form of Judaism in mind.

This chapter has attempted to unravel the different threads that joined together Zionist and colonial attempts to reform Jewish communal education. I have highlighted numerous points of overlap that existed between them, though suggested they nonetheless found themselves at odds over the nature and purpose of religious education. The Department of Education repeatedly expressed concern over the political nature and "anti-religious" spirit of Zionist schools—and the consequent alienation of Jews from common humanity—and attempted to rectify these deficiencies in part by supporting Orthodox Jewish education in Palestine. Yet, administrators found nothing particularly savory about these older forms of communal schooling other than their perceived indifference to mass politics. In launching reform efforts, therefore, the government implied that genuine religious belief and practice could only be nurtured in educational settings that had

[115] In one of his many critiques directed to the Va'ad Leumi, Farrell stated, "The goal of this department is to support the study of religion as an integral (*bilti nifrad*) part of the basic curriculum, that all students must participate in, with the exception of those whose parents have expressed in writing their desire to exempt their children." He further implored the Va'ad Leumi to inform him "what steps you recommend to implement in order to advance the study of religion in General and Labor schools. Jerome Farrell to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Va'ad ha-Leumi (in Hebrew). July 4, 1940. CZA J17\4996.

undergone a series of dramatic changes, at the physical, pedagogic and curricular levels.

Yet, despite the government's fevered warnings that Zionist education had discarded nearly all traces of its "religious" past, this perception was far from accurate. Conversely, based on a review of syllabi, inspection notes and examinations used in the Hebrew Public System, I have suggested that Zionist education was deeply invested in a stressing certain forms of religiosity, or more accurately, in reformulating the relationship between Jewishness and mass politics. In doing so, the Zionist movement had to contend with the contradictions inherent in British policymaking in Palestine—that on one hand, Jewishness should constitute the basis of national rights, but that, as a religion, Judaism should rise above the nationalist tumult. These reflections should invite us to think further about the relationship between the sectarian and the secular on one hand, and the multi-faceted relationship between Zionism and colonialism on the other.

In closing, we might ask whether the Zionist curricula described here represent a form of resistance to the secularizing impulse of the British Mandatory state. Certainly Zionist leaders perceived the British as a colonial force that sought to impose their own standards on the Hebrew Public System, a view that some scholars have accepted.[116] Giving voice to this view, one Labor educator lamented that the Director of Education wished "to fit our varied lives into a framework that is foreign in its preparation – based on his experience in other countries." He further wondered "how any foreign man, an even an educator from the government Department of Education, can dictate to us about the

[116] See, for example, Elboim-Dror, "British Educational Policies in Palestine."

structure of our schools? As if we were born yesterday? We know that the European pedagogy is sophisticated, but we also have a pedagogy, we have methods of education and instruction of our own. We have experience in our education, we have been engaged in the education of our sons for thousands of years, and Europe, when did it begin this?"[117]

While an interpretation of Zionist education as a form of resistance to colonial secularism may initially seem compelling, a closer look renders such an interpretation more doubtful. Countless articulations about *what* the modern Jewish education program in Palestine should entail bear the traces of those very distinctions—between the religious and secular, the traditional and the practical, the spiritual and the material—that Zionist education labored to obscure. Yet "from these distinctions, which were given their hegemony by the culture, no one could be free.'"[118] For instance: "The Tachkemoni school was founded…by parents that aspired to create an educational institution that would be built on the foundations of tradition (*ha-masorah*) and that would also be suitable for the problems of a new age."[119] Our capacity to speak of this education in terms of resistance to secular modernity vanishes with the appearance of the "and" that identifies what is useful as something other than the forms of knowledge (we might reluctantly, anachronistically, label them as "religious") that had structured the order of Jewish life for centuries.

Thus while it may initially seem that the form of education developed under Zionist auspices represented a totally different paradigm than the assimilationist one we began with in examining *Divrei shalom v'emet*, in fact we are quite a bit closer to Wesseley than it may appears. Both bear the mark of a world torn in two, either as a force to be celebrated

---

[117] Moshe Aharon Bejel, untitled, undated memorandum (most likely 1940-1941). CZA J17\4996.
[118] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1983).
[119] *Tazkir l'ḫaverei va'ad ha-ḫinuch she al yadei he-hanhalah ha-tzionit b'eretz yisrael me'at ḫaver morei beit ha-sefer ha-tachkemoni b'yerushaliyim*. (undated). CZA J17\7140.

as the key to Jewish emancipation, or one to be combatted in attempt to recreate a holistic Jewish identity. This commonality reminds us that acts of colonial mimicry and those of colonial resistance need not be regarded as mutually exclusive, that even the most concerted attempts to blur the boundaries between the sacred and secular betray the extent to which these categories had become, to reiterate, a force which no one could escape.

Finally, it is important to note what is at stake in the use of "religious" and "secular" as historical designations, particularly in the midst of lamentations mourning the passing of secular Zionism and its "universal" values. Have we not noticed that assertions of Zionism's secular roots are often heard from those same quarters that lament the "return" of religion in contemporary Israel and that ascribe responsibility for the country's prolonged conflicts to either religious settlers or the growth of ultra-Orthodoxy? These tend to be the same narratives that look nostalgically to the pre-1967 years as Israel's golden age, before the secular dream was upended by messianic imperialism.[120] I have suggested that a critical examination of Zionist education complicates this reading of the past, and rather suggests points of continuity between that past and Israel's present. To shift registers slightly, these reflections seem to substantiate Gershom Scholem's anxieties about the secularization of the Hebrew language, famously voiced in a letter to Franz Rosenzweig. "That sacred language on which we nurture our

[120] Anita Shapira, for instance, has argued that with the emergence of a new generation of Israelis not connected to their socialist roots, Zionism became "more chauvinistic and lost its connection with the universal." See Anita Shapira, *Land and Power* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). It is perhaps no coincidence that Shapira's latest project is a nostalgic biography of David Ben-Gurion.

children, is it not an abyss that must open up one day?"[121] Perhaps Scholem's words resonate with us more than ever as we witness the proliferation of religious politics in Israel and throughout the Middle East. At the very least, they should compel us to consider the lasting impact of colonial modernity not merely in terms of political turmoil, but in the very categories of political action.

[121] From a letter to Franz Rosenzweig, quoted in David Ohana, *Modernism and Zionism* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Conclusion

The Invisible Cross

> There was no way to teach a man to read the Bible…which did not also enable him to read the radical press.[1]

Had the opinions about religious education that prevailed during the early twentieth century materialized, a study like this would have been firmly rooted in a past that was quickly fading from view. The eventual obsolescence of religious observance was undoubtedly the basis of David Ben-Gurion's political calculus in 1947, when he made broad concessions to Agudat Israel in order to guarantee its support for the Zionist project.[2] Similarly, intellectuals like 'Izzat Darwaza and Taha Hussein saw the advance of Islamic civilization marching side by side the juridical retreat of *shari'a* as an all-encompassing legal code for regulating human behavior. In more recent decades, modernization theory posited that societies would naturally secularize en route to modernity. To these miscalculations we may add the colonial one that sits at the center of this study, namely, that religious education constituted a conservative force that would restrain social change rather than propel it.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can place the British approach to religious education on a continuum that, for most of the twentieth century, viewed religious piety as an antidote to unsavory forms of mass politics. In this context, it is worth recalling that Anwar Sadat's assassination by members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad

---

[1] Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (New York: Schocken Books 1981), 110.
[2] David Ben-Gurion, "Status-Quo Agreement" (June 19, 1947), in *Israel in the Middle East*, ed. Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press 2007).

came on the heels of his support for Islamic groups in universities as a counterweight to leftist organizations. Similarly, as late as the 1980's, Israel's attempts to undermine Palestinian national claims took the form of direct aid to its recent archenemy, Hamas. I have argued that the era of nationalism and mass education gave rise to new social conditions wherein the relationship between "religion" and political identity had to be formulated anew. That this could be done in support of revolutionary change rather than in the name of mere continuity has become, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, almost axiomatic.

This was clearly not the case in Mandate Palestine. I have argued that a particular understanding of religion as a politically disinterested code of individual ethics lay at the heart of sectarian policies that linked educational autonomy to the religious community. It was, moreover, the Zionist movement that was able to best capitalize on this administrative structure, though the designation of the Va'ad Leumi as a "religious" body was shown to engender no shortage of contradictions. Moving beyond Palestine's legal order, I have argued that the Mandatory state promoted a "new and improved" type of religious education within both Muslim and Jewish communities as the paradoxical guarantor of the traditional order. Finally, I have shown that while certain Jewish and Muslim educators also found communal schools like the *ḫeder* and *kuttāb* woefully inadequate, they did not acquiesce to the government's view *in toto*, but rather, offered competing educational models in which religious education was a cornerstone of political engagement.

Palestine under British rule has served as the immediate context in charting the intersection of actors (colonial, Zionist, Arab-Islamic) who sought to formulate

the appropriate role of religious education in the era of mass politics. Yet taking stock of this history has required a wider engagement with the transformation of Jewish and Islamic education during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, processes that, I have argued, were coterminous with the extension of colonial or quasi-colonial relationships over European Jews and Arab Muslims. With this background in mind, we can better make sense of the numerous points of overlap that joined British, Zionist and Palestinian Arab educators in Mandate Palestine. It was, after all, during these decades that Jewish and Islamic education underwent a wholesale transformation wherein the modernist innovations of the prior century became standard operating procedure in most of the country's schools.

Yet despite these similarities—ranging from opinions regarding school hygiene to pedagogic approaches to sacred texts—education in Palestine remained a contentious issue, particularly when it came to the role of religious knowledge. As heirs to the modernist traditions that preceded them, Jewish and Muslim educators were conscious of education's revolutionary potential and explicitly viewed schooling as a tool for preparing the next generation for their respective national struggles. This entailed not merely the secularization of communal schooling to include "practical" subjects, but the mobilization of Jewish and Islamic textual traditions to highlight the sacred character of political activism. In this sense, we might offer the following variation on the quote from Raymond Williams featured above: there was no way to teach a man to read the Bible (or in this case, the Qur'an) which did not also enable him to read *it* as a radical text.

On the conceptual front, this project has tried to critically examine the creation and negotiation of certain epistemic boundaries—between the religious and secular, the universal and particular, the pedagogic and the political—and their material consequences for education in Mandate Palestine. I have argued throughout for an appreciation of modern education as an inherently political practice, and that British efforts to deny this fact functioned within a matrix of colonial power that held as self-evident distinctions between pedagogic need and social engineering, public service and mass politics, national pride and national chauvinism, religious morals and politicized religion. Only by appreciating this complex web of distinctions can we understand how British officials found nothing contradictory about, for instance, stressing civic engagement while forbidding "politics" in the classroom. Conversely, it was "native" movement across the boundary that separated colonial practices from their corrupted forms that represented the ultimate transgression.

Yet, it is clear that border separating proper and improper educational practices was not as impermeable as Humphrey Bowman or Jerome Farrell imagined. Broadly speaking, the denial of this porousness was a defining feature of British colonial rule in Palestine. It represented nothing less than the power to render power invisible, and to express this power through policies that insisted they had nothing to do with politics. We might term this a politics of denial, and suspect that such acts gains their strength from the same spring that has, in more recent times, rendered secularism a "universal" model of good behavior. In the context of Mandatory Palestine, the clearest demonstration of this politics of denial came in

the treatment of Christian schools as disinterested, neutral meeting grounds wherein Jews and Arabs could escape the surrounding nationalist tensions.

The Palestine Royal Commission gave clearest voice to this view in its praise for "mixed" (i.e. Christian) schools in Palestine. As J.S. Bennet from the Colonial Office summarized the situation, "the Commission had received evidence that in such schools as St. George's, Jerusalem, or the Jerusalem Girls College, it had been proved that Arabs and Jews could be successfully taught together, and not only work and play together but also make lasting friendships."[3] In its final report, the PRC offered the following description of these schools:

> In most, if not all of them, a high standard of educational efficiency is maintained. Their curriculum is broader than that of the Jewish or Arab schools; their educational ideals and methods are western; and, in most of them, a specifically Christian type of character is aimed at. No encouragement is given to either Jewish or Arab nationalism, not so much by suppression of these aspirations as by diversion of interest into other channels…they provide a fine example of what could have been achieved in happier circumstances.[4]

Within this passage, we can detect several key concepts that were continually mobilized to facilitate the politics of denial: the particularism of Jewish and Arab education versus the "broader" horizons of mixed schools; the diversion of interest away from Jewish and Arab nationalism in favor of more productive channels; the benefits gained from students' exposure to a (presumably apolitical) "Christian type of character."

Alas, happier circumstances were not to be had, though in another slight of hand, the passage quoted above functions to elide the role of British policy-making in producing Palestine's material reality. Rather, the tendency within colonial

[3] J.S. Bennet minute, March 4, 1938. TNA, CO733/362/2.
[4] *Palestine Royal Commission Report*. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937). 254.

administrative circles was to increasingly speak of Palestine in tragic terms as a place whose conflicts were almost supernaturally propelled by a force beyond anyone's control. "Under a different form of Mandate a unitary Palestine state might have been built up with children of both races educated together in common schools."[5] This, more than anything, may constitute the apex of colonial hubris. But more concretely, it is the politics of denial taken to the utmost extreme as colonialism pivots in order to wash its hands of history.

[5] J.S. Bennet minute, March 4, 1938. TNA, CO 733/362/2.

Bibliography

Archives

The British National Archives (TNA):
- CO 733: Colonial Office, Palestine Original Correspondence
- CO 742: Colonial Office, Palestine Government Gazettes
- CO 765: Colonial Office, Palestine Acts
- CO 814: Palestine Sessional Papers
- FO 371: Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence

The Middle East Centre at St. Antony's College, Oxford (MEC):
- Humphrey Bowman collection
- Jerome Farrell collection
- Abdul Latif Tibawi collection

Central Zionist Archives (CZA)
- J1: General Counsel (Va'ad Leumi) of the Jews of Palestine
- J17: Education Department of the Va'ad Leumi
- S2: Education Department of the Palestine Office, Zionist Commission and Jewish Agency

Israel State Archive (ISA)
- RG 8: Department of Education of the Government of Palestine

Haifa Municipal Archives (HMA)
- 7: Jewish Education Committee

The Aviezer Yellin Archives of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora, Tel Aviv University

Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem

Institute for the Revival of Islamic Research and Heritage, Abu Dis

The Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut

Newspapers

Filistin, Mirat al-Sharq, Ha-aretz, The Times

Published primary sources

'Abduh, Muhammad. " Lā'iḥa iṣlāḥ al-qutr al-Suri." In *Al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-imam al-sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, edited by Muhammad 'Imarah. Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993.

———. "Lā'iḥa iṣlāḥ al-ta'līm al-'Othmānī." In *Al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-imam al-sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh* edited by Muhammad 'Imarah. Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993.

———. "Mashru' iṣlāḥ al-tarbiya fi Misr." In *Al-a'māl al-kāmila lil-imam al-sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, edited by Muhammad 'Imarah. Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993.

———. *The Theology of Unity*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1966.

Anglo-American Committe of Inquiry. *Report to the United States Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom*. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1946.

Annual Report for Palestine and Transjordan for the year 1928. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1929.

al-Ashqar, 'Atiyah and Mustafa 'Ināni. *Safwat durūs al-dīn wa al-akhlāq*. Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Rahmaniya, 1932.

'Auda, 'Ali Hasn, al-Sā'ih, Ibrahim Sanwir, and Ahmed al-Khalifa, *Mabāda fi al-dīn al-Islamī*. Jaffa: Maktaba al-Tahir Ikhwan, 1947.

Ben-Gurion, David. ""Status-Quo Agreement" (June 19, 1947)." In *Israel in the Middle East*, edited by Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press 2007.

Berkson, I.B. *The Zionist School System* Jerusalem: Department of Education of the Jewish Agency for Palestine 1930.

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman. "Aftergrowth (Safiah)." In *Aftergrowth and Other Stories*. Philadelphia The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1939.

Blunt, Wilfred Scawen. *The Future of Islam*. London: Paul, 1882.

Bowman, Humphrey Ernest. *Middle-East Window*. 1 vols. Lond.: Longmans, 1942.

———. "Rural Education in the near and Middle East." In *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society Volume XXVI*, edited by The Royal Central Asian Society. London, 1939.

Brill, M. *The School Attendance of Jewish Children in Jerusalem*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press Association 1941.

Darwaza, Muhammad 'Izzat. *Durūs al-tārikh al-'Arabi min aqdam al-azmina ila al-ān* Cairo: al-mutba'a al-salfiya, 1929.

———. *Durūs al-tārikh al-qadim*. al-Quds: Matb'a dar al-Aytam al-Islamiya al-Sanaa'iya, 1936.

———. *Durūs al-tārikh al-mutawasat wa al-hadith*. Cairo: Salafiya Press, 1930.

———. *Muthakkirat Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dar al-gharb al-Islami, 1993.

"Dinim Ve-Heshbonot al Kinuse Hug "Amanah" Ba-Shanim 722-724." edited by Joseph S. Bentwich. Jerusalem: R. Mas, 1965.

Goitein, S.D. "Ha-makor 'ha-aravi' shel yisrael v'dato [the "Arabic" Source of Israel and Its Religion]." *Zion* 2, no. Alef (1937): 1-18.

———. "Ha-yachas el ha-shilton b'islam u v'yahadut [the Relationship to Authority in Islam and Judaism]." *Tarbiz* 19, no. 3–4 (Gimel-Dalet) (1948): 153-59.

———. *Hora'at ha-Tanakh ba-vait ha-sefer ha-'amimi v'ha-tichoni: matarot, shita, tochnit [Teaching the Hebrew Bible in Elementary and High School: Aims, Method, Syllabus]*. Jerusalem1942.

———. "Jewish Education in Yemen as an Archetype of Traditional Jewish Education." In *Between Past and Future, Essays and Studies on Aspects on Immigrant Absroption in Israel*, edited by C. Frankestein. Jerusalem, 1953.

———. "Limud Tefilah B'kitah Dalet Ha-'Amimit: Tefilah Ha-Chag [Teaching Prayer in 4th Grade: Holiday Prayer]." *hed ha-ẖinuch* 18, no. 5 (1944): 18–22.

Gottlober, Avraham Bar. *Zichronot me yamei ne'uri*. Edited by Ruven Goldberg. Jerusalem: 1976.

Government of Palestine, Department of Education. *Annual Report*, 1923-24 – 1945-46.

———. "Syllabus for State Elementary Schools for Boys in Towns and Villages." Jerusalem 1921.

———. *Elementary School Syllabus*. Revised Edition ed. Jerusalem 1925.

———. "Note on Education in Palestine 1920-1929." Jerusalem, 1929.

Government of Egypt, Mininstry of Public Education. "*irshādāt al-'amaliya*." Cairo: Royal Printing Press (al-mutba' al-amiriya), 1920.

Hussein, Taha. *The Days*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997.

Hebrew Education in Erez Israel. Jerusalem: Keren Hayesod, 1930.

Holtzberg, Yitzhak. *ha-ḫinuch ha-dati k'ḫovat ha-horim v'ha-morim.* Jerusalem: Mizrahi World Center 1948.

Khayr al-Din, ʻAbd al-Wahab, Hasn Mansur and Mustafa ʻInāni. *kitāb al-dīn al-Islāmī*. Cairo: Dar al-Kuttub, 1930.

Levine, Yehuda Lieb. "zichron ba'sefer - rishumim me-toldodti ve-koroti (1910)." In *zichronot ve-higayonot*, edited by Yehuda Slotzky, 36-83. Jerusalem, 1968.

Lugard, Frederick John Dealtry Baron. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. [5th ed: London] F. Cass, 1965.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Minute on Education, 1835." In *Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*, edited by H. Sharp. Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965.

Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-hanhala ha-tzioni b'eretz yisrael. *Tokhnit batei-ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim*. Jerusalem: 1923-23.

Maḫlakah ha-ḫinuch shel ha-hanhala ha-tzioni b'eretz yisrael. *Tokhnit ha-limudim ha-nehugah be-vatei ha-sefer ha-amamiyim shel ha-Mizrachi*. Jerusalem: 1933.

Maimonides, Moses. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Translated by Shlomo Pines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

Maine, Henry Sumner *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society and Its Relation to Modern Ideas*. London: J. Murray, 1887.

Nardi, Noah. *Education in Palestine, 1920-1945*: [Washington] Zionist organization of America, 1945.

Nathan, David ben. "A Sermon Contra Wessely." In *The Jew in the Modern World*, edited by Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1980.

Palestine Royal Commission Report. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937.

Palestine Royal Commission. *Summary of Report.* London: His Majesty's Stationary Office: 1937.

———."Testimony of Mr. H. E. Bowman, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director of Education. November 27, 1936." In *Palestine Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937.

The System of Education of the Jewish Community in Palestine: Report of the Commission of Enquiry Appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1945. London: H.M. Stationery Office 1946.

Riger, Eliezer. *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri b'Eretz Yisrael*. Tel Aviv, 1940.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "On the Social Contract." In *The Basic Policial Writings, Second Edition*, edited by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. , 2011.

Talmud Bavli (The Babalonian Talmud): *masekhot* Shabbat, Bava Batra, Gittin

Totah, Khalil. "The Contribution of the Arabs to Education." Columbia University, 1926.

———. "Education in Palestine." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 164, Palestine. A Decade of Development (Nov. 1932): 156-66.

The Waad Leumi [sic] of Keneset Yisrael, *The Jewish Public School System of Palestine* 1932.

Wessely, Naphtali Herz. *Divre Shalom ve-Emet: li-kehal 'adat yiśra'el ha-garim be-artsot*. Vienna, 1826.

———. "Divrei Shalom V'emet." In *The Jew in the Modern World*, edited by Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Secondary sources

'Ali, 'Abdullah Yusuf. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Beltsville, MD: Amana 1999.

Anidjar, Gil. "Secularism." *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 33, no. 1 (2006): 52-77.

Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim. *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Al-Hout, Bayan Nuwayded. *Al-qiyādāt wa al-mu'assassāt al-siyāsiya fi Filasṭīn 1917-1948*. 3 ed: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986.

Allen, Roger. *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*. Manchester: University of Manchester, 1982.

Almog, Oz. *The Sabra : The Creation of the New Jew*, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Antonius, George. *The Arab Awakening; the Story of the Arab National Movement*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1939.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003.

———. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Badran, Nabil. *Ta`lim wa-al-tahdith fi al-mujtama` al-`Arabi Al-Filastini*. Beirut: Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyah, Markaz al-Abhath, 1969.

Bashkin, Orit. ""When Mu'awiya Entered the Curriculum" - Some Comments on the Iraqi Education System in the Interwar Period." In *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths*, edited by Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Batnitzky, Leora. *How Judaism Became a Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Beinart, Haim. "The Exodus of Marranos from the Iberian Penninsula in the 15th and 16th Centuries (Hebrew)." In *Sefer Zichron L'shelomo Umberto Nachon*, edited by Roberto Bonfil. Jerusalem: Mosad Shelomoh Me'ir, Mosad Refa'el Kantoni, 1978.

Bentwich, Joseph S. *Education in Israel*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965.

Ben-Yosef, Yaakov. *milẖemet ha-safot: (ha-ma'avak le-`Ivrit, 1914)*. Tel Aviv: Otsar ha-moreh, Hotsaat ha-sefarim shel Histadrut ha-morim be-Yisrael, 1984.

Bentwich, Joseph S. *Education in Israel*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965.

Berkey, Jonathan P. "Madrasas Medieval and Modern: Politics, Education, and the Problem of Muslim Identity." In *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* edited by Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Biale, David, and Michael Heschel Susannah Galchinsky. *Insider/Outsider : American Jews and Multiculturalism*: University of California Press, 1998.

Billeh, Wadad Kadi and Victor, ed. *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Unheroic Conduct : The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, Contraversions 8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Boyle, Helen N. "Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools." In *Islam and Education Myths and Truths*, edited by Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh, 172-89. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Boyle, Susan Silsby. *Betrayal of Palestine: The Story of George Antonius*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001.

Calhoun, Craig. "Secularism, Citizenship and the Public Sphere." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011.

Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen eds. *Habermas and Religion*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 2013.

Casanova, José. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Commins, David. *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Davis, Rochelle. "Commemorating Education: Recollections of the Arab College in Jerusalem, 1918-1948." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, no. 1-2 (2003): 190-204.

Deror, Yuval and Shimon Reshef. *ha-ẖinuch ha-ivri bi-yamei ha-bayit ha-leumi, 1919-1948*. Yerushalayim: Mosad Byalik, 1999.

Dirks, Nicholas B. *Castes of Mind : Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Dogan, Mehmet Ali and Heather Sharkey, eds. *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011.

Doumani, Beshara. *Rediscovering Palestine*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1995.

Dueck, Jennifer. *The Claims of Culture at Empire's End*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Dweck, Yaakob. *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Elboim-Dror, Rachel. *ha-ḫinuch ha-Ivri be-Erets-Yisrael*, Sifriyah le-Toldot ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Erets-Yisrael; Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1986.

———. "Cycles of Modernization in Education: From the Heder to the School (maslulei modernizatsia be-ḫinuch: me ha-ḫeder le-vait ha-sefer)." In *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*, edited by David Assaf and Immanuel Etkes. Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010.

———. "British Educational Policies in Palestine." *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2000): 28-47.

Etkes, David Assaf and Immanuel, eds. *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*. Tel Aviv: Institute for Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010.

Feiner, Shmuel. *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

———. "Programot ḫinuchiot v'idialim ḫevratiyim: beit ha-sefer 'Hinuch Ne'arim' be-berlin 1778-1825." *Zion* 60, no. 4 (1995): 393–424.

———, and David Sorkin, eds. *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 2001.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

———. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. London: Continuum 2011.

———, ed. *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*. London: Equinox, 2007.

Fleischmann, Ellen. *The Nation and Its "New" Women : The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Fortna, Benjamin C. "Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire." 2000.

Goswami, Manu. *Producing India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Gesink, Indira Falk. "Islamic Reformation: A History of Madrasa Reform and Legal Change in Egypt." In *Islam and Education: Myths and Truths*, edited by Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Gramsci, Antonio. "On Hegemony " In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Joseph Gerteis Craig Calhoun, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Greenberg, Ela. *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Habermas, Jürgen. *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010.

———. "Notes on Post-Secular Society." *New Perspectives Quaterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 17-29.

Halperin, Liora. *Babel in Zion: Hebrew and the Politics of Language in Palestine*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

———. "Orienting Language: Reflections on the Study of Arabic in the Yishuv." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 4 (2006): 481-89.

Hamada, Muhammad 'Amr. *A'lām Filasṭīn min al-qurn al-awal hata al-khāmis 'ashar*. Damascus: Dar Qutaybah, 1985.

Hertzberg, Arthur. *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

Hoffman, Adina. *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza*. Edited by Peter Cole and S. Schechter. New York: Nextbook, 2011.

Holtzman, Avner. "ben hoka'ah le-hitrafkut: ha-ḫeder be-sifrut ha-zichronot u've-sifrut ha-ivrit." In *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*, edited by David Assaf and Immanuel Etkes. Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2010.

Horowitz, Dan, and Moshe Lissak. *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Hourani, Albert. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Jacobson, Abigail. *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

Kalmar, Ivan Davidson and Derek J. Penslar, eds. *Orientalism and the Jews*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005.

Khalaf, Samir. *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant: Ungodly Puritans, 1820-1860*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History. Oxford, New York: Routledge, 2012.

Khalidi, Rashid. *The Iron Cage : The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*. 1st ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.

———, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva Simon, eds. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Khan, Sayyid Ahmad. "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan on Islam and Science." In *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, edited by Andrew Ruppin and Jan Knappert. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Khoury, Philip S. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Kupferschmidt, Uri M. *The Supreme Muslim Council : Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine*. Leiden: New York, 1987.

Latour, Bruno. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1988.

———. *We Have Never Been Modern*: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991.

Levy, Lital. "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History: The View from the East." *Prooftexts* 29, no. 2 (2009): 127-72.

Lockman, Zachary. *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Lowith, Karl. *Meaning in History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.

Mahler, Raphael. *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1984.

Makdisi, Ussama Samir. *The Culture of Sectarianism : Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*: University of California Press, 2000.

Matthews, Roderic D. and Matta Akrawi. *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East: Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon*. Washington: American council on education, 1949.

Matthews, Weldon C. *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris 2006.

Messick, Brinkley. *Calligraphic State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Miller, Ylana N. *Government and Society in Rural Palestine 1920-1948*, Modern Middle East Series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

———. "Rethinking Economy." *Geoforum* 39, no. 3 (2008): 1116-21.

———. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Mufti, Aamir. *Enlightenment in the Colony*. Princeton Princeton University Press 2007.

Musawi, Muhsin Jasim. *Islam on the Street : Religion in Modern Arabic Literature*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

Ohana, David. *Modernism and Zionism*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Ormsby, Eric. "The "Born Schulmeister"." *The New Criterion*, 2003.

Pelli, Moshe. *The Age of Haskalah.* Berlin: Leiden, 1979.

Penslar, Derek. "Zionism, Colonialism, Post-Colonialism." In *Israeli Historical Revisionism : From Left to Right*, edited by Anita Penslar Derek Jonathan Shapira: Frank Cass, 2003.

Porat, Dan. "Between Nation and Land in Zionist Teaching of Jewish History, 1920-1954 " *The Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008): 253-68.

Porat, Reuven Blasi Joseph R. *The History of the Kibbutz: Communal Education, 1904-1929*, Kibbutz Studies Book Series. Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions: Ramat Efal, Israel, 1985.

Rav-Krakotzkin, Amnon. "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrachi Jewish Perspective." In *Orientalism and the Jews*, edited by Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar. Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2005.

Robson, Laura. *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*. Jamal and Rania Daniel Series in Contemporary History, Politics, Culture, and Religion of the Levant; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

Roth, Cecil and Benjamin Jaffe. "Bentwich Family." In *Encyclopedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, 1979.

———. *The World, The Text, The Critic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Saposnik, Arieh Bruce. *Becoming Hebrew : The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Schor, Laura. *The Best School in Jerusalem: Annie Landau's School for Girls, 1900-1960*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press 2013.

Searby, Anne Digby and Peter. *Children, School, and Society in Nineteenth-Century England*. London: New York, 1981.

Shafir, Gershon. *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*. Updated ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Shapira, Anita. *Land and Power*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Sheehan, Jonathan. *The Enlightenment Bible*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005.

Shimoni, Gideon. *The Zionist Ideology*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press 1995.

Shohat, Ella. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, Next Wave. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Sluglett, Peter. *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932*. London: Ithaca Press, 1976.

Somel, Selcuk Aksin. *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 : Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*. Leiden: Boston, 2001.

Starrett, Gregory. *Putting Islam to Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Symonds, R. *Oxford and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Tamari, Salim. *The Year of the Locust*. Berkeley University of California Press, 2011.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Thompson, Elizabeth. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Tibawi, Abdul Latif. *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A Study of Three Decades of British Administration*. London: Luzac, 1956.

———. "Educational Policy and Arab Nationalism in Mandatory Palestine." *Die Welt des Islams* 4, no. 1 (1955): 15-29.

———. "Religion and Educational Administration in Palestine of the British Mandate." *Die Welt des Islams* 3, no. 1 (1953): 1-14.

———. *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*. London: Luzac, 1972.

Turniansky, Chavah. "Heder Learning in the Early Modern Period (limud ba'ḫeder be-et ha-ḫadasha ha-mukdemet)." In *ha-ḫeder: meḫkarim, te'udot, pirkei sifrut v'zichronot*, edited by David Assaf and Immaneul Etkes. Tel Aviv: The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry, Tel Aviv University 2010.

Wasserstein, Bernard. *The British in Palestine : The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History Series. London: Royal Historical Society, 1978.

Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford, Cali. : Stanford University Press, 1976.

Weiss, Max. *In the Shadow of Sectarianism : Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture*. New York: Schocken Books 1981.

Wodziński, Marcin. *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*. Oxford; Portland, Or.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005.

Zakim, Eric Stephen. *To Build and Be Built: Landscape, Literature, and the Construction of Zionist Identity* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006.

Zaman, Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim, ed. *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Unpublished theses

Abdoh, Majd Abed-al-Fatah. "Educational Conditions in Nablus During the British Mandate (*Al-Ouḍā' Al-Ta'limiya Fi Nablus Ibān Al-Intidāb Al-Briṭāni*)." Al-Najah National University, 1998.

Halperin, Liora. "Babel in Zion: The Politics of Language Diversity in Jewish Palestine, 1920-1948." UCLA, 2010.

Leest, Charlotte van der. "Conversion and Conflict in Palestine: The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant Bishop Samuel Gobat." Leiden University, 2008.

Shemesh, David. *beit ha-midrash le-morim "Mizrahi": masad la-ẖinuch ha-dati ha-leumi*. Jerusalem: misrad ha-ẖinuch veha-tarbut, minhal ha-ẖinuch ha-dati - gaf hakhsharat morim: ha-mikhlalah ha-datit le-morim `a.sh. R.A.M. Lifshits, 1991.

Weissman, Deborah. *ẖinuch banot datiyot bi-Yerushalayim bi-tekufat ha-shilton ha-Briti: hitmasdutan ve-hitgabshutan shel hamesh ideologyot ẖinuchiyot.* Hebrew University, 1993.

Wolf, Judith L. *Selected Aspects in the Development of Public Education in Palestine 1920-1946*. Boston College, 1981.